

ifa ECP Monitor Country Report

# Sweden

ifa ECP Monitor Country Report



Hertie School



Institut für  
Auslandsbeziehungen

## 1. External cultural policy objectives in geopolitical context

Sweden is a small country, ranking 87<sup>th</sup> by population size. However, in terms of its economic output and political weight (Table 1), Sweden punches well above its weight. In Europe, it is one of the more advanced economies and its citizens enjoy one of the highest living standards in the world (Statista, 2020b).

In 2019, Sweden earned the 4<sup>th</sup> place on the Soft Power 30 ranking. It is the only Scandinavian country to make it in the top ten (Norway comes in at 12<sup>th</sup>), scoring very high on the areas of Enterprise, Education, and Government (Portland, 2019). In particular, Sweden continues to rank highly in the indices on sustainability, innovation, global commitment, and talent attraction (Swedish Institute, 2020). The Global Competitiveness Index, for example, places Sweden 8<sup>th</sup> in comparison of 141 countries (WEF, 2019). Overall, Sweden has had great success abroad. Popular icons such as Ingmar Bergman, Astrid Lindgren, Greta Thunberg, or organisations like the Nobel Foundation and companies (IKEA, Volvo, Spotify, etc), are all part of the successful Swedish brand.

**Table 1: Country's geopolitical and geoeconomic position**

	2019	% change since 2015	
Population (millions) / ranking	10.23 / 87 <sup>th</sup>	9.74 / 1%	
GDP ranking	23 <sup>rd</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup>	
GDP per capita	€46,160 / 14 <sup>th</sup>	-0.7	
Cultural economy (%GDP)	0.5 <sup>(2018)</sup>	0	
Education economy (%GDP)	6.9 <sup>(2018)</sup>	0.5	
R&D economy (%GDP)	3.32 <sup>(2018)</sup>	0.1	
Media economy (%GDP)	0.2 <sup>(2018)</sup>	0	
Sources: Eurostat, World Bank			
Geopolitical position			
Hard power rank	32 <sup>nd</sup> / 0.5304 <sup>(2020)</sup>	24 <sup>th</sup>	↓
World trade rank (\$ million)	25 <sup>th</sup> / 477,029	26 <sup>th</sup> / 425,775	↑
Soft power rank	4 <sup>th</sup> / 77.41	9 <sup>th</sup> / 66.49	↑
Diplomacy rank	33 <sup>rd</sup>	31 <sup>st</sup> <sup>(2016)</sup>	↓

Sweden's government expenditure on culture corresponds to the EU-28 average of 1% (Table 2). The country stands out in a positive way in relation to cultural participation. For instance, in 2015, Sweden recorded among the highest levels of cultural engagement in Europe at 85% (Eurostat, 2019). Sweden's commitment to the development of science and technology is also

substantial. In 2018, Sweden invested 3.32% of its GDP on research and development, the highest in Europe for that year, and above the goal of 3% set by the EU 2020 strategy (Table 1) (OECD, 2020). However, the national goal of around 4% has not been reached. The country has a high research intensity in international comparison, as one of the top five in the OECD with the largest number of researchers and scientific publications per inhabitant (Swedish Research Council, 2019). Equally, Sweden is the leader in Europe in terms of education spending – it devoted 6.9% of its GDP in 2018 (European Commission, 2020).

**Table 2: Government spending on ECP fields as a % of total outlays**

	2019	% change since 2015
Culture	1 <sup>(2018)</sup>	0
Education	13.80 <sup>(2018)</sup>	0.80
R & D	1.49	- 0.09
Media	0.40 <sup>(2018)</sup>	0

Source: Eurostat

## 2. External cultural policy: an overview

**Table 3: Key ECP Statistics for Country**

	2019
Number of countries with ECP activities	128
Total number of institutions abroad	~ 25
Total number of FTE staff engaged in ECP activities	~ 447
Government financial support (€ million)	93.4 <sup>1</sup>
Total expenditure of all ECP operators (€ million)	/
Comparative ECP ranking	middle

Diplomatically, Sweden has traditionally adhered to the policy of neutrality. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the EU-US transatlantic cooperation, it needed to reconsider its position, and especially after joining the EU in 1994 (Villanueva, 2007). The country made more concerted efforts towards developing an external cultural policy with the establishment of the Swedish Institute (SI) in 1945. Initially known as the Swedish Institute for Cultural Exchange with Foreign Countries, the organisation's purpose was to communicate Swedish neutrality policy and stance on international affairs, as well as improve the per-

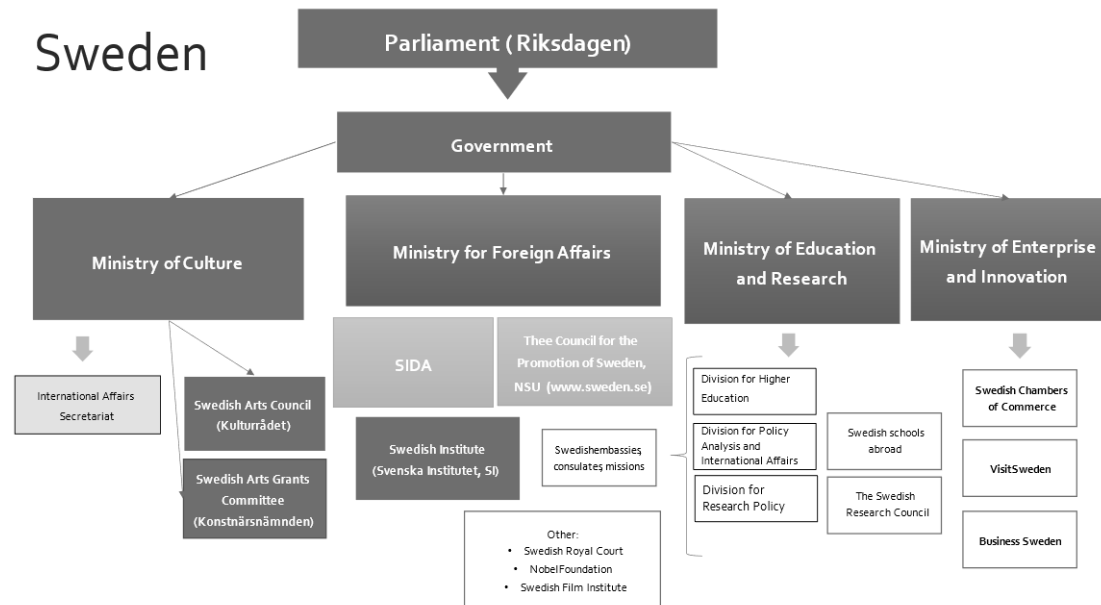
<sup>1</sup> Refers to the sum of budget items: Swedish Institute, Information about Sweden abroad, Cooperation within the Baltic Sea region, Nordic Cooperation, Grants for Swedish teaching abroad, Education and University Research (Int. programs), and Government grants for general cultural activities, development, and international cultural exchange and cooperation. Please note that for the latter (= €45.33 million) there is no specific information on "international cultural exchange and cooperation" which means that value could be skewed.

ception of Sweden abroad. Afterwards, the country introduced international aid and development programs, primarily via Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (*Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete*, SIDA) to further expand its public outreach (Sevin, 2017).

Sweden's main strategies for external cultural policy were set out in 2003 in a report by the Committee of Inquiry on International Cultural Activities. The government defined cultural diplomacy as "that part of diplomacy that is intended for the creation of long-term, sustainable relations with other countries and with culture as a means" (Swedish Government, 2003). Public diplomacy, on the other hand, is the "country's communication with the general public in other nations with the purpose of creating understanding for their own nation's way of thinking, ideals, institutions and culture as well as national goals and current politics" (ibid.). In a document titled *Internationalisation of cultural life 2005/06*, another goal is to strengthen Sweden's international presence through cooperation and include culture in its policy of global development. The idealistic and more pragmatic views merged with time into three main objectives in external cultural policy: a) culture and cultural exchange as a goal in itself, b) foster peace, human rights, sustainability, c) enhance Sweden's image abroad as an attractive location for business and exports (Villanueva, 2007).

The main actors in external cultural policy are the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and partly the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation. The mentioned ministries finance but do not implement the policies directly. This is typically the task of government agencies. For that reason, the coordination between agencies is much more common than inter-ministerial cooperation (Harding, 2016).

To coordinate the efforts between different government departments and organisations, a separate agency was established in 1995, the Council for the Promotion of Sweden (NSU). NSU gathers representatives from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications, VisitSweden, Business Sweden, and Swedish Institute. The Ministry of Culture oversees the activities in culture and media. The Ministry of Enterprise is partly responsible for international development. VisitSweden is the promotion agency for tourism, and Business Sweden supports Swedish enterprises abroad. The main actor responsible for the organisation and implementation of external diplomacy campaigns is the Swedish Institute (ibid.).

**Figure 1: Institutional map of country's ECP**

There is a strong tradition of cooperation with the Nordic countries via several institutions like the Nordic Ministers Culture Fund. Before Sweden joined the EU, the country established the Nordic Council in 1952, alongside Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Finland. Policies were created and implemented jointly. In recent times, however, apart from taking a quasi-leadership over Scandinavian culture, Sweden has also started to promote national culture more actively. In that sense, it could be said that external cultural policy in the Swedish case is two-fold: cultural relations in the Nordics and beyond.

In the 2000s, Sweden embraced the nation-branding exercise in the form of “Brand Sweden”. Brand Sweden is understood as everything originating in Sweden, from products to people. The expectation is that the positive effect of the carefully curated brand may result in added value to the domestic economy. Just how important the strategy is, illustrates the fact that the country closely follows how its brand compares internationally. For example, on the Anholt Ipsos Nation Brands Index (NBI), Sweden placed 9<sup>th</sup> in 2019 (IPSOS, 2019). Swedish Institute monitors international trends and country rankings in the fields of innovation, sustainability, talent attraction, in its publication *The Image of Sweden Abroad* (Swedish Institute, 2019). The Institute is also tasked with maintaining and overseeing the national brand and its global reputation. Indeed, some authors would argue that SI in its present form “resembles more to a marketing agency [...] rather than a government institution” (Sevin, 2017).

The concept of the ‘Swedish model’ is a substantial component of Sweden’s external image and has earned endearment throughout the world. The notion entails everything from the universal welfare policy to country’s contributions to humanity as a whole, and not excluding the Swedish way of drinking coffee (*fika*) or its unorthodox approach to the COVID-19 pandemic. The ‘Swedish model’ could be considered a trademark of the country. It follows that ‘Brand Sweden’ is an attempt to promote the ‘Swedish model’. Thus far, it has had wide appeal. Foreign publics have a predominantly positive perception of Sweden, especially in relation to its governance and social equality. Moreover, with ongoing global issues such as gender equality, environment and sustainability, many are looking to Sweden as a role model (Krutmeijer, 2008; Sevin, 2017; Wallström, 2015).

### 3. Fields of ECP

#### 3.1. Culture and the arts

**Table 4: Key statistics on culture and the arts**

<i>Swedish Institute (SI)</i>	2019	2015
Number of countries active	-	128
Number of cultural agreements	2	-
Number of institutes	2 <small>*only 1 branch abroad in Paris</small>	2
Number of FTE staff	~ 140	-
Number of artists in exchange programs <small>Konstnärsnämnden/Swedish Arts Grants Committee</small>	131	132 <sup>2</sup>
Budget (€ million)	47.32	48.13
Government financial support (€ million)	27.75 Support for SI alone: 11.83	44.75 <sup>3</sup> Support for SI alone: 9.63

As mentioned previously, Swedish ECP approach is built around a national brand. The central authorities focusing on external cultural policy are four main actors: NSU, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sida, and Swedish Institute. The branding strategy is decided between the NSU and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Sida and SI are the organisations responsible for on-the-ground and promotional activities.

The Swedish Institute (*Svenska Institutet*, SI) is a government agency under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that promotes interest and confidence in Sweden around the world. Although it has limited permanent physical presence abroad, SI was active in 128 countries in 2015 (Swedish Institute, 2016). Its task is to disseminate knowledge about Sweden and the Swedish language abroad and promote cooperation and lasting relationships with other countries in the fields of culture, education and research, business, as well as democracy and society in general (ibid.). These goals are implemented with the capacity of about 140 employees and an annual budget of nearly €50 million (see Table 4). The main Stockholm office's purpose is to strengthen the influence of Sweden (26% of the total budget), strengthen the cooperation in the Baltic Sea region (30%), as well as promote democracy and human rights in the EU's eastern neighborhood (44%). Sweden's only cultural institution abroad is located in Paris (est. 1971). The operations of the Swedish Cultural Centre in Paris focus on cultural promotion, the Swedish language learning, and Swedish-French bilateral exchanges. Annually it attracts 70,000 - 100,000 visitors (Swedish Institute, 2016, 2020). More information about its language operation is given in the following section.

<sup>2</sup> Total grants for inbound international cultural exchange (residence, cultural exchange, and travel allowance).

<sup>3</sup> For both years, refers to the funds the Swedish Institute received from the state budget for financing grants.

In terms of geographic focus, the institute initially focused on Sweden's immediate neighborhood, the US, and the UK. During the Cold War, it further expanded its geographic reach and became active internationally. When the Iron Curtain collapsed in Eastern Europe, SI made one of its priorities to play "an important role in the process of integrating the new neighbors into a European collaboration" (Sevin, 2017; Swedish Institute, 2013). The cooperation with the countries in the Baltic Sea Region<sup>4</sup> and EU Eastern Partnership countries has remained one of the priorities. The activities should contribute to strengthened democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights, and eventually to improved integration with the EU countries.

To achieve this, the institute supports organisations and individuals in form of scholarships, visiting programs, project collaboration etc. (Swedish Institute, n.d.). 1,738 individuals benefited from these programs in 2019 (scholarships: 1153; leadership programs: 488; visiting programs: 97). The alumni network of past participants is present in 33 countries (Swedish Institute, 2020). Further, SI arranges expert and journalist visits in order to spread the knowledge and interest in Sweden. The visits are carried out according to strategic priorities but also in consultation with foreign authorities and media organisations. Sixty-four journalists were welcomed in 2019 (Swedish Institute, 2020). SI also works closely with domestic universities and high schools to promote Sweden as a destination for study and work.

The Swedish Arts Council (*Kulturrådet*) is a government authority under the Ministry of Culture. It is tasked with promoting culture and fulfilling the national cultural policy objectives. The organisation and its staff of around 70 work to promote international culture exchange and actively collaborate with cultural departments at the Swedish embassies. For instance, it organises international conferences, coordinates the Swedish presentation in international performing arts fairs, and promotes Swedish literature in translation (Kulturrådet, n.d.). The council also administers the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, worth SEK 5 million (roughly €500,000), the world's largest prize for children's and young adult literature.

The Swedish Arts Grants Committee (*Konstnärsnämnden*) is a government agency which promotes the development of arts and culture, as well as international exchange. In 2019, its budget was SEK 225.8 million (around €20 million). Its most comprehensive program, the International Artists Studio Programme in Sweden (IASPIS), has been around since 1996 and comprises 13 artist studios. The Committee offers residence grants to incoming artists and supports Swedish artists to exhibit abroad. Geographically, there is a slight emphasis on Europe, North America, and Asia. The share of exchanges with the Nordic neighborhood has increased recently, while exchanges with African countries have declined. The countries with the most cultural exchanges have been the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Foreign artists in Sweden were sponsored with SEK 545,008 each, or around €50,000 in 2019. In total, 68 artists were supported through the mobility program, and 63 were awarded the Arts Council's residence (Konstnärsnämnden, 2020).

Lastly, the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), under the MFA, is a major contributor to international development cooperation. The overarching goal is to improve the standard of life and reduce poverty. Support to culture and the media is synonymous with human development. This perspective is adapted from the 1998 World Conference (hosted by Sweden) "The Power of Culture" where "sustainable development and the flourishing of

---

<sup>4</sup> SI's work in the Baltic Sea Region includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Ukraine, and sometimes Denmark, Finland, and Germany (Swedish Institute, n.d.).

culture are interdependent” (qtd. in Wyszomirski, Burgess, & Peila, 2003). In its policy for cultural development, SIDA supported many cultural exchange program, like the Swedish-African Museum Program (SAMP) (Harding, 2016). Today, however, SIDA gives more priority to other issues like equality and sustainability.

### 3.2. Language

**Table 5: Key figures on language promotion**

	2019	2015
Number of countries where courses are offered	1	-
Number of students enrolled		
In-class	250	400
Online reach	-	14,800
Number of candidates for Swedish language qualifications	n/a	n/a
Number of language teachers	-	32 <sup>5</sup>
Budget (€ million)	<i>see above</i>	-
Government financial support (€ million)	<i>see above</i>	-

Sweden does not actively promote Swedish language abroad and English has been chosen as the language to represent the country internationally. English has even approached becoming a local rather than a foreign language in Sweden by virtue of its strong presence in a variety of contexts, the media, public spaces, popular culture (Hult, 2012). With English increasingly becoming *lingua franca* and the language of business, there is a growing concern that Sweden is losing its ‘Swedishness’. Understandably, in order to reach wider audiences, Swedish ECP is primarily communicated in English. However, it also prevents Swedish from breaking out of the “niche language” stage.

This claim can be corroborated by relatively limited language learning offerings. In total, about 400 students learned Swedish language offered in 38 courses at SI Paris in 2015. Almost a third of all students stated that the motive for learning Swedish was work-related with the goal to access the Swedish job market (Swedish Institute, 2016). Presently, the institute’s language school in Paris hosts up to 250 students (Swedish Institute, 2020). SI’s traditional language learning offer is complemented with a free web course in Swedish for beginners (*learningswedish.se*). At university level, Swedish studies are appealing to a number of students. Around 230 institutions which offered this study program in 38 countries attracted 33,500 students (14,000 outside the Nordic region) (Swedish Institute, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Swedish lecturers abroad who receive a grant from SI to supplement their wages.



### 3.3. Primary and secondary education

The Swedish schools abroad follow the Swedish curricula and teaching is in Swedish. The schools cover the preschool, years 1-6 and in certain cases years 7-9 and upper secondary school. The institutions are entitled to state subsidies. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate supervises the government grants, and the National Agency for Education is responsible for the evaluation of education activities. Currently, there are 18 such schools abroad located in England, France, Kenya, Mozambique, Portugal, Spain, Germany, and Austria. So-called Swedish sections exist at some international schools (France, Poland, Hungary, Vietnam, UAE) where students receive education in the Swedish language. For the Swedish children and young people without access to any of these schools, a local school association sometimes offers supplementary education in Swedish equivalent to two hours per week. Lastly, there are Swedish sections at European schools<sup>6</sup> in Brussels and Luxembourg (Skolverket, 2021). While more detailed information is not available, the Swedish International Education Association (SUF) estimates that almost 6,000 students take advantage of remote instruction in Swedish (SUF, n.d.). The Swedish education abroad is supported with around €9 million per year (ESV, 2020).

**Table 6: Key figures on primary and secondary education**

<i>Skolverket - National Agency for Education (Swedish Schools Abroad)</i>	2019	2015
Number of countries	8	-
Number of schools	18 + 5 Swedish sections at international schools	18
Number of students	~ 6,000	-
Number of staff / teachers	-	-
Government financial support (€ million)	9.74	9.8 <sup>7</sup>

### 3.4. Tertiary education and science

Sweden enjoys a high level of attractiveness as a study destination. Swedish universities regularly place at the top of different international rankings. Five institutions—Karolinska Institute (a renowned medical school), Uppsala University, Lund University, Stockholm University, and KTH Royal Institute of Technology—have made it into the world's top 100. High academic quality, society perceived as being welcoming, and good quality of life were only some of the reasons for 30,912 foreign students to study there in 2018 (UIS, 2020). Sweden attracts a high share of students from abroad studying for a doctoral degree – 35.1%, placing fifth EU-wide in 2017 (Eurostat, 2019). Apart from choosing the Scandinavian education

<sup>6</sup> European schools are for children of parents who work at an EU institution.

<sup>7</sup> Government grants for Swedish teaching abroad.

brand, there are other practical reasons to opt for Sweden. Students from the EU/EEA area can study tuition-free. Other international arrivals can choose from around 1,000 degree programs taught in English (StudyEU, 2021).

Sweden's number of inbound foreign students peaked in 2010/11, with a total of 46,700. After that year, the number decreased substantially after the introduction of tuition fees for citizens outside of EU/EEA. Nevertheless, the share of non-EU students has since slowly increased again, especially those from Asia. Among students who paid for their studies, the largest number came from India and China, with almost 1,800 students combined. Compared with incoming students, there were fewer Swedish students abroad, 22,500 in 2019/20, largely because the most popular countries (the US, the UK, and Ireland) have lost some of their appeal (SCB, 2020).

Before the introduction of study fees, Sweden was continuously increasing the share of international students which made up to 40% of all students starting a doctorate and up to 60% in 'STEM' fields (Van Der Wende, 2015). After the number took a nosedive, the Swedish government wants to increase academic mobility and make it easier for foreign students to remain and work in Sweden after graduation (UKÄ, 2019). More foreign graduates would supply Sweden's knowledge-based economy. At the same time, the Scandinavian education system has enough soft power potential to make Sweden globally more attractive and serve as a model for other countries (Swedish Government, 2018).

**Table 7: Key figures on tertiary education**

	2019	2015
Number of countries	-	-
Number of domestic universities	14 public universities and 17 public colleges	31
Number of universities / colleges abroad	Swedish School of Economics: 2 (SSE Riga in Latvia, and SSE Russia)	-
Number of students		
Number of foreign students <sup>8</sup>	30,912 <sup>(2018)</sup>	26,672
Number of students at trans-national higher education (TNE)	-	-
Number of government scholarships awarded <small>SI Swedish Institute Study Scholarship (SISS)</small>	186	267
Number of staff / teachers	-	-

<sup>8</sup> Data based on Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students | UNESCO UIS. (2020). Retrieved 2 September 2020, from <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>.

	2019	2015
Budget (€ million)	SI scholarships: 9.45 UHR <sup>9</sup> scholarships: 5.6	-
Government financial support (€ million)	7.58	8.66 <sup>10</sup>

**Table 8: Key figures on science and research**

	2019	2015
Number of countries	35 (Sida development work)	-
Number of institutes	<p><i>Examples</i></p> <p><i>Research institutes with an international agenda:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ RISE Research Institutes of Sweden</li> <li>○ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)</li> <li>○ the Foreign Policy Institute (UI)</li> <li>○ Folke Bernadotte Academy</li> <li>○ Nordic Africa Institute</li> <li>○ Swedish Institute of Space Physics</li> </ul> <p><i>Abroad:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul (SRII)</li> <li>○ Swedish Institute at Athens</li> <li>○ Swedish Institute of Classical Studies in Rome</li> <li>○ Swedish Institute Alexandria</li> </ul>	
Number of researchers / staff	-	-
Number of projects (Horizon 2020)	3,143	-
Government financial support (€ million)	-	-

In similar fashion, science and research are crucial to Sweden's global competitiveness and to boosting its economy. The goal is to position Sweden as one of the world's foremost research and innovation countries. As a prominent 'knowledge nation', Sweden should also lead the way in major societal changes, like climate and the environment, digital development, and gender equality.

The R&D sector is very well-developed and mainly funded through the central government and thriving business sector. Swedish Research Council (*Vetenskapsrådet*), a government agency within the Ministry of Education and Research, is the largest public funding body.

<sup>9</sup> Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR).

<sup>10</sup> Government support for Education and University Research – International Programmes.

Other major research-funding agencies include Formas<sup>11</sup>, Forte<sup>12</sup>, and Vinnova – Sweden’s Innovation Agency. Additionally, a number of research foundations exist, including the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT). STINT, for instance, invested SEK 8.4 million (€0.8 million) in research cooperation with foreign universities (STINT, 2021).

Abroad, Swedish research is well-represented in classical studies and archaeology: Swedish Institute in Istanbul (est. 1962), Swedish Institute at Athens (est. 1946), Swedish Institute of Classical Studies in Rome (est. 1925), Swedish Institute Alexandria (est. 1999). Within the domestic borders there are many institutes with an international agenda, for example the Nordic Africa Institute (est. 1962), a research center on modern Africa sponsored jointly by the Nordic countries.

Sweden is an active member in Nordic<sup>13</sup> research cooperation. Apart from contributing to regional development, one of the aims of the cooperation is to strengthen the Nordic region internationally and make it attractive for work and business. An important actor has been NordForsk (est. 2005, based in Oslo), an organisation under the Nordic Council of Ministers<sup>14</sup> which provides funding for regional research cooperation. In total, during the period 2009-2018, NordForsk awarded NOK 2.12 billion (€215 million) to 323 Nordic research projects, involving more than 2,640 researchers (NordForsk, 2019).

Swedish research has also benefited from its participation in the EU framework program, Horizon 2020. With €1.4 billion awarded, Sweden ranked 8<sup>th</sup> among the countries with the most funding, performing better than its Nordic neighbors (Swedish Research Council, 2019). Germany was the country with the most collaborations with Swedish researchers, followed by Spain, France, and Italy (EC, 2020).

The importance of science and technology for development was stressed already in 1975, with the establishment of the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC). Research capacity development is at the heart of how Sweden supports research abroad. Examples include the Research Training Partnership Programme<sup>15</sup> which aims to develop research capacities of foreign partners with the support of Swedish universities. Through the so-called “sandwich PhD model”, the foreign students can benefit from coursework and supervision of a Swedish university but are anchored at their home university. Altogether, SIDA has been an important ECP actor, with bilateral research cooperation (BRC) programs in 25 countries. Currently, 7 BRC programs are active in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Cambodia, and Bolivia. The focus is usually on the least developed countries with relatively poor systems of higher education and research (SIDA, 2021).

---

<sup>11</sup> Formas – the Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning.

<sup>12</sup> Forte – Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare.

<sup>13</sup> Nordic cooperation refers to Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden as well as the three autonomous areas, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands.

<sup>14</sup> The Nordic Council of Ministers is the Nordic governments' cooperation forum.

<sup>15</sup> The Research Training Partnership Programme is a Sida funded program for partnerships between Higher Education Institutions in selected countries and Swedish universities.

### 3.5. Foreign Media

#### *Radio*

The only equivalent to foreign media is the public service broadcaster Radio Sweden (*Sveriges Radio*, SR), and its international and multicultural channels. The history of international operations (SR International) dates back to 1939, at the start of World War Two, with an initial purpose to inform Swedish nationals abroad. The language offer varied over the years and depending on the global developments, included Russian, Belarusian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Estonian, Latvian. Most of these newsrooms were discontinued and after 2010 Sveriges Radio's broadcasts on short- and medium-wave ceased (Sveriges Radio, 2010).

Today, radio programming is aimed at both international and domestic audiences bringing news about Sweden, Swedish society, and Sweden's role and reputation in the world. The SR conducts its operations independently from the state and other interests. The broadcasting license stipulates that its foreign programme should reflect different cultural circles and contain programming for different parts of the world. Among other things, the broadcast should strengthen the Nordic cultural community. At home, via 4 national and 25 local channels, Sveriges Radio has the responsibility to promote the Swedish language but also provide content in national minority languages (Finnish, Sami, Meänkieli, Romani Chib and Yiddish). The programming in immigrant languages aims to contribute to the integration process and peaceful coexistence of many cultures (Swedish Government, 2020). The Swedish public channels, Sveriges Television AB and the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Corporation (UR), are in this respect quite similar to their UK counterparts (BBC), with an understanding that publicly funded media should actively engage in education of its audiences (Lindberg, 2012).

As a part of Ekot<sup>16</sup>, SR publishes news about Sweden every weekday in 6 languages that are native to many immigrant communities (Arabic, English, Kurdish, Farsi, Somali, Tigrinya<sup>17</sup>) (Sveriges Radio, 2020a). Most of this programming is aired via two channels: P2 and P6. Radio Sweden P6 is a multilingual channel broadcasting a mix of music, immigrant and minority language programmes and programmes from foreign radio broadcasters such as the BBC. Outside the country, it is available digitally and, in the app Sveriges Radio Play. P2 channel also carries programming in immigrant languages<sup>18</sup> for 5 hours a day (Sveriges Radio, 2020b). The total estimated audience of Radio Sweden is 7 million listeners weekly (Sveriges Radio, 2020a). Unfortunately, there is no consistent data about its international reach. SR is also active worldwide through its own network of 13 foreign correspondents<sup>19</sup> (Sveriges Radio, 2020c).

#### *Television*

Sveriges Television (SVT) is the Swedish public television broadcaster with no significant international programming. SVT does however cooperate with other broadcasters within Nord-

<sup>16</sup> Ekot (Dagens Eko – "Echo of the day") is the news service of Sveriges Radio.

<sup>17</sup> Tigrinya is a Semitic (Afro-Asiatic) language. It is spoken by many immigrant communities around the world, including Sweden. Sveriges Radio Tigrinya is a temporary investment.

<sup>18</sup> Languages: Arabic, English, Kurdish, Farsi, Somali, Romani, Finnish and Sami.

<sup>19</sup> Foreign correspondents are located in Bangkok, Berlin, Bogota, Brussels, Helsinki, Cairo, Maputo, London Moscow, New York, Paris, Beijing, Washington

vision, the Nordic public media regional partnership. The members<sup>20</sup> co-develop and exchange programmes and information. The purpose of such cooperation, besides economic benefits, is to support Nordic identity and create understanding across the cultural and linguistic borders (Harrie, 2013).

Sveriges Television used to have its own international service, SVT World, primarily aimed at the Swedish-speaking diaspora in Finland and Swedes abroad. The basis for this was an agreement from the 1960s between Finnish and Swedish counterparts to be able to exchange and broadcast programmes in both countries (Sveriges Television, 2017). The channel had a Europe-wide distribution since 1997 (SVT Europa). Its offer expanded in 2005 and thereby became available in Africa, Asia, and Australia (renamed SVT World in 2009). With time, however, the number of subscribers decreased, and the Finnish partner network eventually decided to stop the retransmission of SVT World. As a consequence, SVT World stopped its distribution worldwide in April 2017 (Briel, 2016).

### *New Media*

Since the 2010s, Sweden started investing heavily in digital communication, especially in the domain of social media. Stronger digital engagement was the initiative of the then-Foreign Affairs Minister, Carl Bildt, who urged diplomatic missions to establish a presence on Twitter and Facebook. One example is the famous Twitter account *@sweden* which was curated by a different Swedish citizen every week. Published in 2011, to “boost interest in Sweden ... and show in practice it is an open and democratic country”, the Twitter page gathered almost 150,000 followers (Henley, 2018). Despite this, there were difficulties in integrating new technology and diplomacy. In 2017, for example, one curator caused a stir when she blacklisted 14,000 accounts because they allegedly were “threatening to migrants, women and LGBTQ people” (Henley, 2018). After the public outcry, the Swedish Institute then quickly unblocked the list which even included journalists and Swedish MPs. The Curators of Sweden experiment was finally abandoned after seven years and 365 contributors.

The agency NSU also has a dedicated website, *sweden.se*, which interestingly gives the general public the access to a wealth of promotional and audio-visual material (*Sharing Sweden, imagebank.sweden.se*). More and more platforms are added every year and innovative formats like animated films and Facebook advertising campaigns are a part of Sweden’s standard vocabulary. Six official websites communicate Swedish culture and values in English, Chinese, Arabic, and Russian languages reaching 6.9 million users in 2019. Similarly, Sweden’s official social networks channels attract around 3.2 million followers (Swedish Institute, 2020).

---

<sup>20</sup> The members are DR (Denmark), NRK (Norway), SVT (Sweden), Yle (Finland), and RUV (Iceland), as well as 4 associate members: KNR (Greenland), KVF (Faroe Islands), UR (Sweden) and Swedish Radio (SR, Sweden).

**Table 9: Key figures on foreign broadcasting**

<b>Radio: Sveriges Radio – Radio Sweden</b> (includes domestic audiences)	<b>2019</b>	<b>2015</b>
Number of countries broadcasted to	1 (Sweden)	-
Number of languages	6	-
Number of channels	2 multilingual channels	-
Audience (million)	7	-
Digital & social media audience	Facebook: 104,572 Instagram: 35,300 Twitter: 25,300	-
Budget (€ million)	271.5 <sup>21</sup>	285.4
<b>New Media</b>		
Social networks following	3.2 million followers	3 million followers
Audience / unique visitors (monthly /million)	Sweden's 6 official websites: 6.9	Sweden's 9 official websites: 7.1
Number of languages	4	4
Budget (€ million)	1.43	1.55
<small>"Information about Sweden Abroad"</small>		

## 4. Challenges and future outlook

As an export-driven country (exports make around 45% of GDP)<sup>22</sup>, Sweden depends on international collaboration and favourable public perception abroad. Sweden's strengths reside in its strong and reputable enterprise industry, where Soft Power 30 ranked the country second, even surpassing Switzerland (Portland, 2019). Sweden is the second country worldwide breeding the most "unicorn" start-ups<sup>23</sup> (Klarna, Oatly, Spotify, etc.) and yet little is known about its best ambassadors. By leveraging these powerhouses, Sweden could further strengthen its position as an entrepreneurial hub and a leader in creative innovations.

Sweden's positive image as an almost utopian place to live, with exceptionally high standard of life, is solidly anchored in people's minds (Swedish Institute, 2019). The country is also recognised worldwide as an environmental and social example. The "Greta Effect" has allowed Sweden to be involved in a narrative that makes the young generation look up for fairer and responsible institutions. The nation branding has been very successful so far to project Swe-

<sup>21</sup> Total annual expenditure of the Swedish public broadcaster, Sveriges Radio. No specific data is available for international and multicultural channels.

<sup>22</sup> For comparison, Germany's exports as share of GDP were 47.42% (WITS, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> A unicorn start-up is a privately owned start-up company valued at over \$1 billion.

dish values to other nations and convey a very favourable image of the country. As an unfortunate consequence, too much branding and centralized marketing could potentially come across as a propaganda campaign. Also, the Swedish Brand has taken a couple of blows. Initially lauded as the successful ‘Swedish model’ in dealing with the global coronavirus crisis, the perception soon changed, “and instead of serving as an example to emulate it became a model to avoid” (Simons, 2020). Even though it might be too early to assess the suitability of Sweden’s COVID-19 strategy, and as polarising as the country’s crisis management may be, it has globally been perceived as somewhat negative. Nevertheless, relatively negative reporting about Sweden’s slow response to the global COVID-19 pandemic or growing populism, seem to be exceptions rather than a rule to an outside observer.

Swedish education is very well renowned, with schools ranking among the best in the world (the Royal Institute of Technology, The Royal Music Academy and others) and Swedish schools have established campuses abroad (e.g. Stockholm School of Economics - SSE in Latvia and SSE in Russia). Benefiting from the presence and influence of the Nobel committee, many scholars are attracted to Sweden. The Nordic model of education is praised around the world, and opportunities for Swedish students to go abroad are numerous, allowing local students to act as ambassadors in many prestigious schools around the world. Swedish higher education is free for European citizens and a vast majority of programmes are in English. However, negative developments such as the rise of far-right, anti-immigrant parties are set to challenge Sweden’s idyllic reputation and “Open Sweden” brand strategy (Serioli, 2021).

A major obstacle for Sweden is its lack of brick-and-mortar presence abroad. Apart from the Swedish Institut in Paris and SIDA’s operations, it has no real cultural physical centers in the world. Since Sweden has at its disposal a more generous spending capacity in ECP than its Nordic neighbors, it is curious it has not developed a more visible presence. One reason could be that Swedish contemporary culture is not that appealing to global audiences. For most people around the world, Swedish culture revolves around electronic music, Volvo cars, and practical furniture. However, the country does have a rich cultural offering and, if properly introduced in other countries, it could be a showroom of Nordic culture.



## References

- Apollo. (2021). *Kulturrådet - Swedish Arts Council*. Retrieved from <https://www.apollo.io/companies/Kulturr-det---Swedish-Arts-Council/54a1395c69702d2a1ec63e00?chart=count>
- Briel, R. (2016, November 2, 2016). SVT World to end international distribution. *Broadband News*. Retrieved from <https://www.broadbandtvnews.com/2016/11/02/svt-world-end-international-distribution/>
- Brommesson, D. (2018). 'Nordicness' in Swedish foreign policy – from mid power internationalism to small state balancing? *Global Affairs*, 4(4-5) (pp. 391-404). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2018.1516116>
- EC. (2020, 24 July 2019). *Sweden Horizon 2020 country profile*. Retrieved from <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/dashboard/sense/app/a976d168-2023-41d8-acec-e77640154726/sheet/e1b57f9a-669b-4962-bdb9-0151c523120f/state/0>
- ESV. (2020, 2020-03-17). *Annual outcome for the central government budget 2019 - open data*. Retrieved from <https://www.esv.se/psidata/arsutfall/?year=2019>
- European Commission. (2020, November 12, 2020). *Education spending as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) in European Union countries in 2018 [Graph]*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1073151/education-spending-in-eu-countries/>
- Eurostat. (2019). *Culture Statistics 2019*. Retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/10177894/KS-01-19-712-EN-N.pdf>
- Ghitis, F. (2020, May 14, 2020). The 'Swedish Model' Is a Failure, Not a Panacea. *World Politics Review (WPR)*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/28759/the-swedish-model-is-a-failure-not-a-panacea>
- Harding, T. (2016). *Country profile: Sweden*. Retrieved from [https://www.culturalpolicies.net/wp-content/uploads/pdf\\_full/sweden/sweden\\_112016.pdf](https://www.culturalpolicies.net/wp-content/uploads/pdf_full/sweden/sweden_112016.pdf)
- Harrie, E. (2013). *A Nordic Public Service Media Map: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden*. Nordicom, University of Gothenburg.
- Henley, J. (2018, Tue 4 Sep 2018 ). @sweden signs off after seven years as Twitter voice of nation. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/04/sweden-signs-off-after-seven-years-as-twitter-voice-of-nation>
- Hult, F. M. (2012). English as a Transcultural Language in Swedish Policy and Practice. *TESOL Quarterly*, 46(2) (pp. 230-257). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.19>
- IPSOS. (2019, 18 November 2019). Germany Retains Top "Nation Brand" Ranking, France and Canada Emerge to Round Out the Top Three. *Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index (NBI)*. Retrieved from <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/Germany-Retains-Top>
- Konstnärsnämnden. (2020). *The Arts Committee annual report 2019*. Retrieved from Stockholm: <https://www.konstnarsnamnden.se/Sve/Nyheter/PDFer/%C3%85rsredovisning%202019%20Konstn%C3%A4rsn%C3%A4mnden.pdf>
- Krutmeijer, E. (2008). *Facing the Future: Sustainability the Swedish Way*. Retrieved from Stockholm: [https://issuu.com/swedish\\_institute/docs/facingthefuture](https://issuu.com/swedish_institute/docs/facingthefuture)

- Kukavica, K. (2014). *“Digital Diplomacy”. A study of the diplomatic communication on the social media*. Lund University, Retrieved from <https://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/record/4586836/file/4618952.pdf>
- Kulturrådet. (n.d.). *Our international networks*. Retrieved from <https://www.kulturradet.se/en/our-operations/our-international-networks/>
- Lindberg, B. (2012). *Cultural Policy in the Swedish Welfarestate*. Paper presented at the The Asan Conference: Understanding the Swedish Welfare Model, Seoul, South Korea, 30–31 Aug. 2012
- NordForsk. (2019). *Ten years of Nordic Research Funding*. Retrieved from <https://www.nordforsk.org/2019/ten-years-nordic-research-funding>
- OECD. (2020, August 19, 2020). *Gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD) as a percentage of GDP in selected European countries in 2018 [Graph]*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/420958/gerd-as-a-share-of-gdp-in-europe/>
- Portland. (2019). *Soft Power 30: A Global Ranking of Soft Power*. Retrieved from <https://softpower30.com/>
- SCB. (2020). *Higher education International mobility in higher education from a Swedish perspective*. Retrieved from <https://www.scb.se/publication/40954>
- Serioli, C. (2021, January 2, 2021). Sweden’s Identity Crisis and the Rise of the Far Right. *Global Risk Insights*. Retrieved from <https://globalriskinsights.com/2021/01/swedens-identity-crisis-and-the-rise-of-the-far-right/>
- Sevin, E. (2017). Collaboration and Public Diplomacy: Sweden. In *Public Diplomacy and the Implementation of Foreign Policy in the US, Sweden and Turkey* (pp. 109-141). Cham: Springer International Publishing
- SIDA. (2021). *Evaluation of Sida’s Model for Bilateral Research Cooperation*. Retrieved from <https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/7070-evaluation-of-sidas-model-for-bilateral-research-cooperation.pdf>
- Simons, G. (2020). Swedish Government and Country Image during the International Media Coverage of the Coronavirus Pandemic Strategy: From Bold to Pariah. *Journalism and Media*, 1(1) (pp. 41-58)
- Skolverket. (2021, March 12, 2021). *Swedish education abroad*. Retrieved from <https://utbildningsguiden.skolverket.se/gymnasieskolan/om-gymnasieskolan/studera-eller-gor-praktik-utomlands#h-Svenskutbildningiutlandet>
- Statista. (2020a). *Public service television in Sweden*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/study/38061/public-service-television-in-sweden-statista-dossier/>
- Statista. (2020b). *Sweden 2020*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/study/48401/sweden/>
- STINT. (2021, 2021-03-23). *STINT invests SEK 8.4 million in research cooperation with foreign universities*. Retrieved from <https://www.stint.se/en/2021/03/23/stint-investerar-84-mkr-i-forskningssamarbeten-med-utlandska-universitet/>
- StudyEU. (2021). *Rankings: The 15 best universities in Sweden for 2021/2022*. Retrieved from <https://www.study.eu/best-universities/sweden>
- SUF. (n.d.). *Swedish schools abroad - the best of both worlds*. Retrieved from <https://www.utlandsundervisning.se/svenska-utlandsskolor/>
- Sveriges Radio. (2010, 16 March 2010). *Fewer but stronger newsrooms within Sveriges Radio’s international offering*. Retrieved from <https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/3562253>

- Sveriges Radio. (2020a, 28 January 2020). *About Swedish Radio*. Retrieved from <https://sverigesradio.se/grupp/33821>
- Sveriges Radio. (2020b, 6 May 2020). *Our channels*. Retrieved from <https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/733463>
- Sveriges Radio. (2020c). *Sveriges Radio's annual report 2019*. Retrieved from Stockholm: <https://sverigesradio.se/diverse/appdata/isidor/files/3113/9da88f81-fd56-42df-84ae-e0022893aa56.pdf>
- Sveriges Television. (2017, 30 Mar 2017). *The broadcasts on SVT World have stopped*. Retrieved from <https://omoss.svt.se/arkiv/nyhetsarkiv/2017-03-30-sandningarna-pa-svt-world-har-upphort..html>
- Swedish Government. (2003). *International Cultural Inquiry 2003*. Retrieved from <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2003/12/sou-2003121/>
- Swedish Government. (2015, 19 May 2015). *Research-funding in Sweden*. Retrieved from <https://www.government.se/government-policy/education-and-research/research-funding-in-sweden/>
- Swedish Government. (2018, 01 February 2018). *Internationalisation of Swedish Higher Education and Research – A Strategic Agenda*. Retrieved from <https://www.government.se/information-material/2018/02/internationalisation-of-swedish-higher-education-and-research--a-strategic-agenda/>
- Swedish Government. (2020). *Broadcasting permission for Sveriges Radio (AB) 2020–2025*. Retrieved from <https://sverigesradio.se/diverse/appdata/isidor/files/3113/4ae1e84e-e978-4b48-8972-8e3a674781df.pdf>
- Swedish Institute. (2013). History. *Swedish Institute*. Retrieved from <https://eng.si.se/about-si/history/>
- Swedish Institute. (2016). *Annual Report 2015*. Retrieved from <https://si.se/app/uploads/2017/10/svenska-institutets-arsredovisning-2015.pdf>
- Swedish Institute. (2019). *The image of Sweden abroad 2018*. Retrieved from [https://si.se/app/uploads/2019/02/si\\_rapport\\_sverigebild\\_web\\_low.pdf](https://si.se/app/uploads/2019/02/si_rapport_sverigebild_web_low.pdf)
- Swedish Institute. (2020). *Annual Report 2019*. Retrieved from <https://si.se/app/uploads/2020/02/svenska-institutets-arsredovisning-2019.pdf>
- Swedish Institute. (n.d.). *About SI*. Retrieved from <https://si.se/en/about-si/>
- Swedish Research Council. (2019). *The Swedish Research Barometer 2019: The Swedish Research System in International Comparison*. Retrieved from <https://www.vr.se/download/18.2c821fd116dcb0e77cbb66/1572265814692/2019%20The%20Swedish%20Research%20Barometer.pdf>
- UIS. (2020). *Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students*. Retrieved from <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>
- UKÄ. (2019). *Higher education institutions in Sweden - 2019 status report*. Retrieved from <https://english.uka.se/about-us/publications/reports--guidelines/reports--guidelines/2019-08-14-higher-education-institutions-in-sweden--2019-status-report.html>
- Van Der Wende, M. (2015). International Academic Mobility: Towards a Concentration of the Minds in Europe. *European Review*, 23(S1) (pp. S70-S88). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798714000799>
- Villanueva, C. (2007). *Representing Cultural Diplomacy: Soft Power, Cosmopolitan Constructivism and Nation Branding in Mexico and Sweden*

- Wallström, M. (2015). *Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved from Stockholm:  
<https://www.government.se/speeches/2016/02/statement-of-government-policy-in-the-parliamentary-debate-on-foreign-affairs-2016/>
- WEF. (2019). *The Global Competitiveness Report 2019*. Retrieved from  
[http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf)
- WITS. (2018). *Germany trade statistics : Exports, Imports, Products, Tariffs, GDP and related Development Indicator*. Retrieved from  
<https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/DEU>
- Wyszomirski, M. J., Burgess, C., & Peila, C. (2003). International cultural relations: A multi-country comparison. In: *Ohio state university. Arts policy and administration program*

## Imprint

The External Cultural Policy Monitor

Developed by Helmut K. Anheier, Hertie School & UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, and ifa Competence Centre. Supervised by Helmut K. Anheier. Coordinated by Sarah Widmaier for ifa.

Preferred citation

Markovic, Darinka (11/2021). "Sweden. Country Report," in: Helmut K. Anheier and ifa (eds.). The External Cultural Policy Monitor. Stuttgart: ifa.

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the ifa.

Publisher:

ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)  
Charlottenplatz 17,  
70173 Stuttgart,  
Postfach 10 24 63,  
D-70020 Stuttgart

[www.ifa.de](http://www.ifa.de)

© ifa 2021

Author: Darinka Markovic

Copy-editing by:

ifa's Research Programme "Culture and Foreign Policy"

Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0)



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17901/ecp.2021.052>