

sverigesradio

Government Bill for public radio and television in Sweden

The Government Bill “Culture and Accessibility – Public Radio and Television 2014-2019 (Prop. 2012/13:164) contains the Swedish Government proposals for conditions and guidelines for Sveriges Radio AB (SR), Sveriges Television AB (SVT) and Sveriges Utbildningsradio AB (UR) for the charter period 2014-2019.

The overall guidelines are:

A media market with many free and independent entities, clear rules, and healthy competition provides proper conditions for the free formation of opinions, the free exchange of ideas, and practical opportunities to monitor those in power. A significant task for media policy is to create proper conditions for these entities to establish themselves and develop on the media market. Ensuring a varied offering in the field of media also requires strong, independent public radio and television with a clear mission – to offer a broad programming selection accessible to all, that reflects diversity across the country and which is characterised by good quality, comprehensiveness, and relevance.

Proposals:

Radio and television license fee system retained

The current radio and television license fee system works well and should remain until further notice. The fees constitute a secure, stable, and predictable source of funding that keeps the broadcasting companies independent and self-governing. The willingness to pay is stable, and the number of people paying has lately been increasing. 57 000 new net payers this year which is about 30 000 more than earlier projected as an increase for the entire 2013.

Since February 2013, SVT has been broadcasting all its programming channels via the Internet. As a result, even computers, tablets, and smart phones fall under the concept of television receiver, according to the interpretation of the current legislation by the collecting association Rikab.

The constant development of technology and changes in consumption patterns provide reason to investigate if a possible new fee model or an overview if the existing model could become valid. But a change in that case should not be implemented before 2020 considering that the present system stays stable.

Radio and television license fee remain fixed in 2014

Today, the yearly fee totals SEK 2,076 per household. According to Government opinion in the Bill, the fees will not change in 2014. The Government intends to come back to the level of radio and television fees for the rest of the licence period.

Increased resources

According to the proposal, the funds for SR, SVT and UR will be adjusted upwards by 2% yearly during the licence period. The Government Bill builds on the number of fee payers not decreasing to any great extent. In addition, particular increases in resources for UR (see below) and for SR are proposed, in order to strengthen activities connected to the concert hall Berwaldhallen: the Radio Sweden Symphony Orchestra and the Radio Chorus. SR will get an extra 6 MSK for that.

More resources to UR to strengthen their educational mission

As new technology makes greater breakthrough in the schools, so grows the need and demand for radio and TV programming that strengthens learning in education. Education and knowledge are one of the Swedish Government's main priorities, since it is crucial for unity and people's growth as well as for the ability to compete, growth, and employment.

UR thus receives an extra 50 MSEK annually to develop and broaden its educational offerings. UR programming activities in the field of education must also be directed towards folk high schools and adult educational associations. The organisation now has the opportunity to develop its offerings of educational programmes for all ages. For example, UR can make important efforts in promoting reading from preschools up through secondary school; in higher education, collaboration with Swedish universities and colleges can lead to lectures being recorded and disseminated to a wider audience.

Terrestrial radio to be digitalised

A transition from analogue to digital terrestrial broadcasting has several advantages, including accessibility for listeners to more radio channels across the country. The development should be market-driven, while the market requires clear conditions. The Swedish Government thus intends to task an industry coordinator to draw up a plan, along with the Swedish Radio and TV Authority (Myndigheten för radio och tv), for transition from FM broadcasts to terrestrial digital radio. This should be done in a dialog with the Swedish Radio as well as the commercial radio broadcasters. The aim should be to shutdown FM broadcasts in 2022. When the plan is in place it will be decided if more funds are needed to be allocated to SR and UR to secure quality content in the digital channels.

Public service to reach all

In addition to the broadcasts (radio and TV) that is regulated via the broadcasting charter it is up to the public service companies to define where, and on which platforms, they should have their content available. This should be based on audience demand, the possibility to actually reach the audience and the audience access to equipment to use the content on different platforms. The audience should be able to access the content without having to pay anything extra besides the license fee.

Public Value Test

There should be conducted an overview of the current Public Value Test. It has to be clarified what is to be considered experimentation and therefore not to be tested. Neither should activity no longer than 12 month that is geographically or audience limited need to be tested. If a activity is started for innovating reasons and not permanent is should also not have to be tested

The Swedish Radio and TV Authority (Myndigheten för radio och tv) will also get a new assignment to analyze how the different program makers are affecting the media market as a whole, the competition and the market development as such. It this analyze the Authority should closely follow the development on the internet.

Programme offerings must reflect the entire country's diversity

The mission is to be broadened so that the programme offerings reflects the country not just from a geographical perspective, but also from the variation of interests found among the population. The broadcasting companies will also be tasked with conducting their activities from the perspectives of equality and diversity.

SR and SVT should have continued conditions for a decentralised organisation, which means – among other things – that at least 55% of the general production in national broadcasts is to be produced outside of Stockholm.

More programmes in minority languages

It is clear from the Government Bill that the broadcasting company's offerings in the national minority languages – Finnish, Saami, Meänkieli and Romani chib, as well as SVT's and UR's offerings in sign language, must increase yearly (in total not by each individual company). All broadcasting companies must also offer a selection in Yiddish and other minority languages.

Increased accessibility for people with disabilities

Particular requirements are imposed on SVT and UR as regards the scope of supplementary services: subtitling, sign language interpretation, audio

description, and text read aloud.

The applicability of these services, especially text read aloud, must be developed with the user perspective as a starting point.

The level of ambition regarding accessibility to broadcasts should be raised further with more concrete objectives for the broadcasting companies that can be followed up.

Reporting requirements made more stringent

Public radio and TV must be characterised by independence and transparency. It should be simpler to compare and review the companies. More stringent requirements on SR, SVT, and UR for reporting income alongside radio and television fees are thus proposed in the proposition.

Special reporting requirements for commercial collaboration and sponsored programmes on SVT have been introduced. SR, SVT, and UR must also report on how they ensure their independence in the case of indirect sponsorship.

Broadcasting Commission's role clarified

The Swedish Broadcasting Commission is tasked with monitoring whether the broadcasting companies are fulfilling their commission. The proposal clarifies that the review must also cover use of resources, cost effectiveness, and productivity.

The Commission will receive increased resources to fulfil their commission.