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POPULATION REGISTRATION IN  
SWEDEN

BY

POPULATION REGISTRATION CENTRE,  
SWEDISH TAXBOARD ADMINISTRATION

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# Introduction to population registration

## The significance of population registration

Population registration is the general registration of the Swedish population and involves the ongoing registration of people living in the country and their place of residence.

Population registration is of major importance to the individual. Many situations require a person to provide proof of his or her name or marital status and this can be done by means of an extract from the population registers. Registration is a precondition for entitlement to child benefit or sickness benefit.

A further reason for population registration is to satisfy the needs of society with regard to basic census information. This basic information includes details of the identity, residence and family circumstances of private individuals who are or have been resident in Sweden. Together with other personal details, this information forms part of the population registration records. The details are forwarded to the personal registers at other authorities, for example the Vehicle Registration Authority and the Swedish Population and Address Register (SPAR).

One mistake in the population registration process can result in a mistake appearing in the registers maintained by many other authorities and could entail loss of an individual's rights.

## History

Population registration in Sweden dates back a long time. From the beginning it was dealt with by the Church. The earliest reference to the maintenance of parish registers was in 1571 and Sweden's oldest existing parish register dates back to the beginning of the 17th century. The first national directive concerning parish registration came in 1686 when the priests were assigned the task of maintaining so-called catechetical interview records for the whole population.

The 1946 population registration reform brought about the introduction of personal identity numbers. The population registration process became a means of facilitating the collection of taxes, checking tax returns, maintaining social statistics and regulating the labour market.

EDP was introduced into the population registration process in the 1960s, resulting in the personal identity number as we know it today. On July 1, 1991, the responsibility for population registration was transferred from the parish offices of the Church of Sweden to the Tax Administration.

## Population registration at the Tax Administration

All day-to-day population registration is dealt with by the Tax Administration on a local level at each tax office.

Most details are collected by means of the tax offices receiving information from other authorities. Only in a small number of cases does a private individual need to submit information. When this happens it is usually related to the names of newly-born children, certain changes of name, changes of address or immigration and emigration.

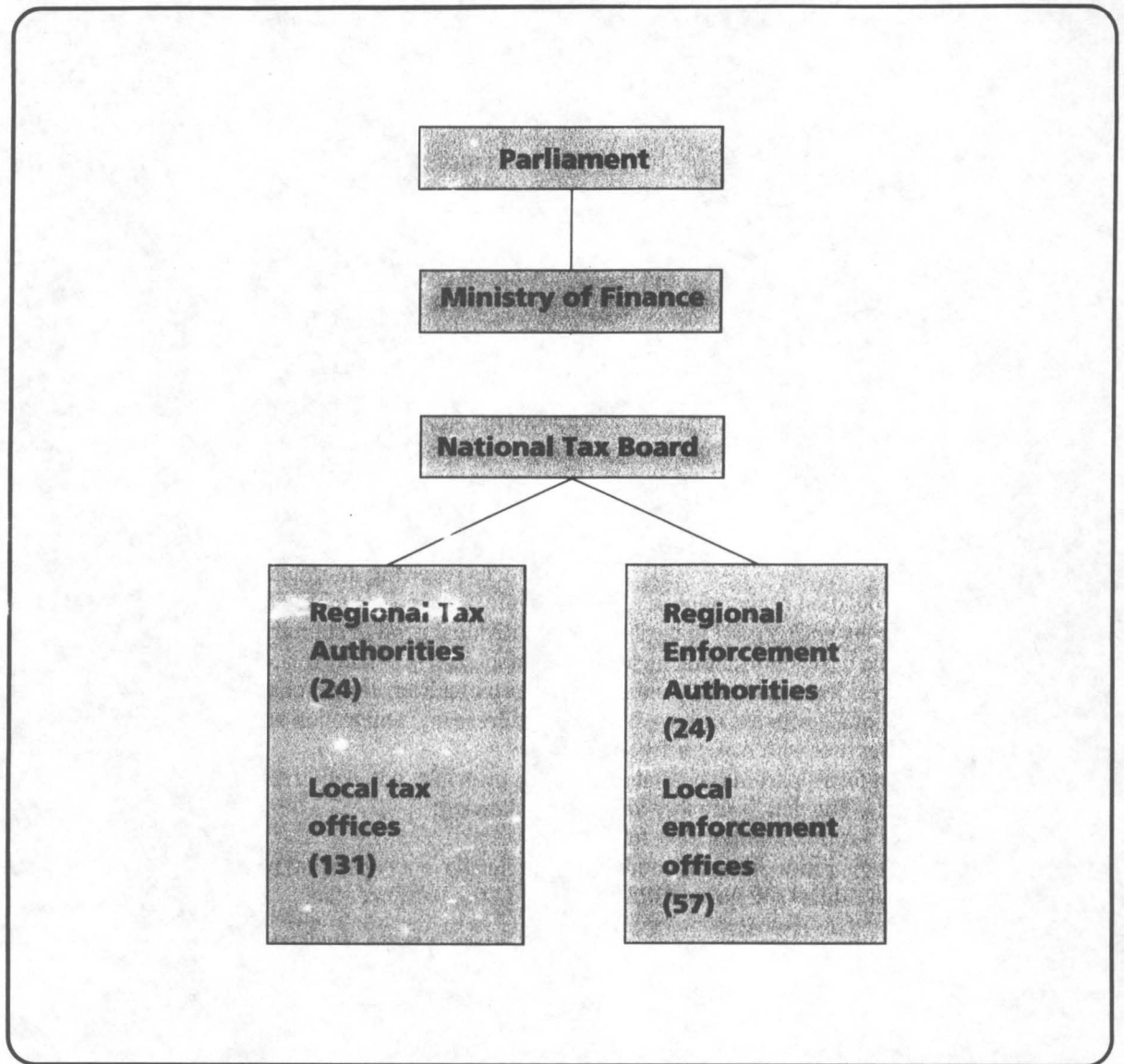
In principle, population registration involves the following:

- details of a population registration case are sent to the local tax office
- the details are received and allocated a registration number
- the matter is dealt with by a member of staff who decides if the case can be registered in the population register
- the case is registered
- information can be provided in the form of a register extract or by notifying users out in society.

A decision is made at the tax office within whose geographical area of responsibility the person referred to in the decision lives or, in the case of a person who has died or moved abroad, where they were registered most recently. In the case of a change of address, the decision is sent to the tax office in the area to which the person has moved.

## Personal identity number

Each person registered in the population register must have a personal identity number as a form of identification. The personal identity number has ten digits and the only details that can be deduced are the person's date of birth and sex.



## The task of the National Tax Board

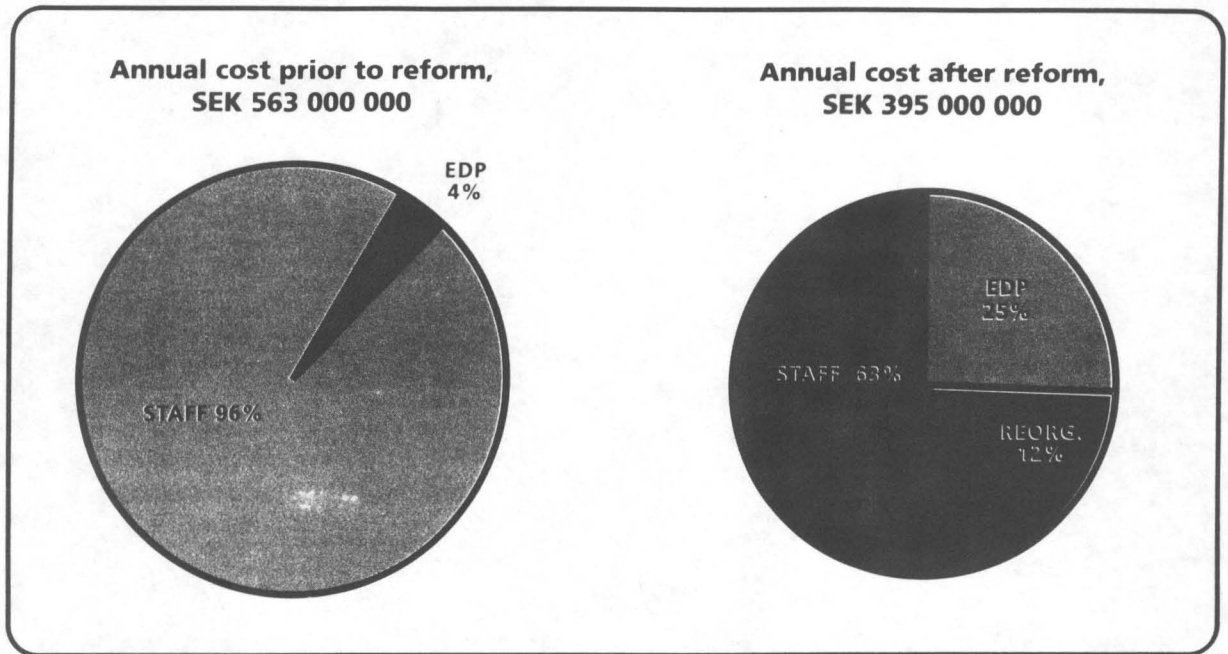
The task of the National Tax Board is to ensure that the work involved in population registration at the tax offices is carried out in a correct and uniform manner and that the needs of society with regard to basic census information are satisfied. The Board's responsibility covers both administrative and material issues related to population registration.

The National Tax Board should ensure that operations are run efficiently and correctly by following up and monitoring the quality of the way in which cases are dealt with at the tax offices. A major task for the National Tax Board is to present, process

and prioritise proposals aimed at developing and amending the EDP system, official forms and so on.

The Board is also responsible for the provision of information and advice to the tax offices with regard to more substantial population registration issues and the EDP system being used. Within the population registration field there are contact persons both for administrative issues and legal matters. The National Tax Board mediates all information, advice etc. to the local tax offices via these contact persons.

## Costs and processing times



The transfer to a new EDP system in 1991 resulted in a considerable reduction in costs.

The staff costs include salaries for staff at the parish offices and the Tax Authority. The costs for the parish offices have been recalculated at 1993 levels. The EDP cost includes the cost of operating and administering both the old and the new population registration systems. The reorganisation costs have been spread over ten years.

In 1993, an average of 5 minutes was required to issue a register extract at a cost of approximately SEK 12.

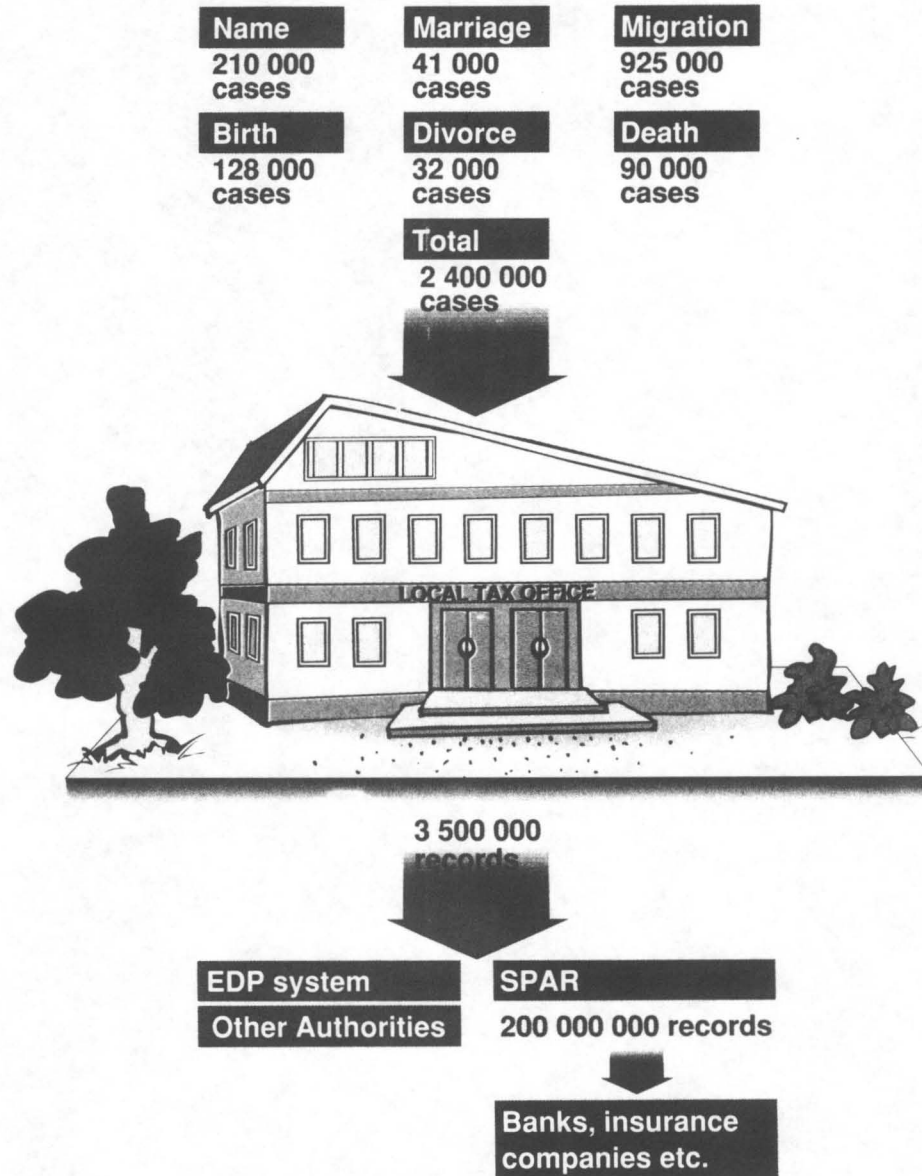
In 1993, a task took on average 20 minutes to deal with at a cost of approximately SEK 50.

The aim is that 70 % of all cases should be completed within two days. It is estimated that this will be generally achieved by the end of 1993. The National Tax Board follows up fulfilment of the Tax Authority's goals by processing case statistics. The quality of the processing procedure is also monitored by means of random checks.

# The extent of population registration

Each year, the population register issues approximately 2.2 million register extracts and processes

approximately 2.4 million cases, of which just under half are related to a change of address.



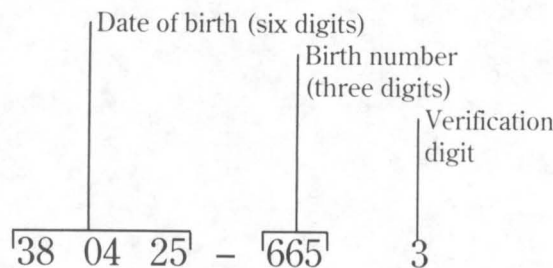
Reports on these cases are then sent, mainly on magnetic tape, to various users of population registration data.

The system records approximately 3.5 million changes in the registers annually, and then the Swedish Population and Address Register (SPAR) issues around 200 million reports on these changes to the users.

# Personal identity number

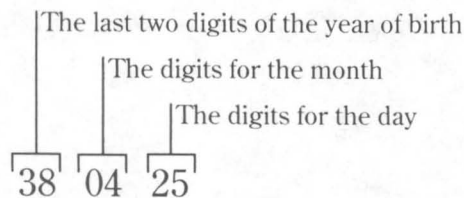
Each person whose name is in the population register must have a personal identity number as an identification code. Rules governing personal identity numbers are to be found in Section 18 of the Population Registration Act (1991:481). Personal identity numbers may also be allocated in certain cases to people who are not in the population register. The personal identity number has ten digits and could, for example, be 380425-6653 for a man born on April 25, 1938. Personal identity numbers were introduced in 1947. Once a person has been allocated a personal identity number he or she keeps it for life, unless it needs to be corrected as a result of the numbering being incorrect. The only particulars that can be deduced from a personal identity number are the date of birth and sex.

The personal identity number consists of three parts.



## Date of birth

The date of birth is stated using six digits. The sequence of the digits is as follows:



## Birth number

The birth number consists of three figures, forming a number between 001-999 with an odd number for a man and an even number for a woman. People born on the same day must have different birth numbers. The combination of the digits for the date of birth and the different birth numbers of those who were born on the same day ensures that every-

one receives a different identification number. A person who was born on April 25, 1938 may receive the birth number 665 if he is a man and 666 if she is a woman. Between the date of birth and the birth number there is a hyphen (-), which is replaced by a plus sign (+) when a person reaches the age of 100.

The figure with which the birth number begins is of no significance. From 1990, birth numbers are allocated at random from a series which covers the whole country. Previously, a different series of numbers was used for each county.

## The verification digit

The verification digit is calculated mechanically and is automatically added to the birth number as a fourth digit. With the aid of this digit it is possible for data processing systems to check automatically that incorrect figures have not been given in the date of birth or the birth number.

## Allocation of a personal identity number

The local tax office allocates a personal identity number to a child when he or she is registered in the local population register. All children born in Sweden are registered, as are children born abroad to women who are in the population register in Sweden. The Tax Authority allocates personal identity numbers for purposes other than the population register, for example for the issue of a tax demand note, registration with a social insurance office or in conjunction with the issue of a Swedish passport or driving licence.

## Use of the personal identity number

The personal identity number has become widely used as an identification code not only for population registration but also in other areas of administration, e.g. as a conscript number, in the national insurance scheme, for the registration of a car, driving licence or passport and in the education system. The personal identity number is also widely used outside the public sector, for example in the internal accounting systems of large companies and in registers maintained by insurance companies and banks.

## Calculation of the verification digit

The verification digit is determined using the "modulus 10" method, with the magnitudes 1 and 2. The figure is added to the birth number according to the following rules. The example relates to a man born on April 25, 1938 with the birth number 665.

1. The digits in the year, month and day of birth and the birth number are multiplied alternately by 2 and 1.
2. Add together the figures in the products. Note: 12 is counted as 1+2.
3. The unit digit in the sum of the digits is deducted from the figure 10.
4. The remaining digit is a verification digit. If the remainder is 10 the verification digit will be 0.



Year of birth	Month of birth	Day of birth		Birth number	Verification
38	04	25	-	665	3

$$\begin{array}{r}
 380425 - 665 \\
 212121 - 212 \\
 \hline
 \end{array}$$

$$6+8+0+4+4+5+1+2+6+1+0 = 37$$

$$10-7=3$$



# Legal rules for population registration – overview

## General

Population registration is governed primarily by two laws that came into force on July 1, 1991. One of these is the Population Registration Act which contains rules concerning when and where a person should be registered, the obligation to report details to the population register and the right of appeal against population registration decisions.

The second act, the Population Register Act, contains rules about which EDP registers can be maintained for population registration and what these may contain.

These laws have been supplemented by government ordinances. There are certain other ordinances issued by the National Tax Board which can also issue general recommendations to the authorities. Such recommendations are not binding and simply state how the Tax Authority can or should act in certain cases.

Population registration is affected by a number of other statutes. For example, Sweden has a special Name Act with rules concerning acquisition and loss of a name. Another example is the Computer Act which includes rules concerning the obligation of the authorities to rectify incorrect information in their registers. There is also the Secrecy Act and legislation concerning a child's origin, marriage, Swedish citizenship and death.

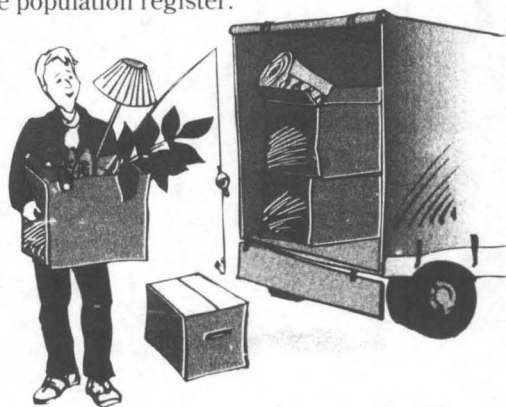
## Details in the population register

Certain basic information is recorded for every person, i.e. name, date of birth (included in the personal identity number), place of birth, citizenship and marital status. There are also details of the parents, spouse, children and place of residence. In the case of children, there are also details of who has legal custody and whether the child is adopted. Following death, details are also recorded of where the deceased person is buried.

## Registration

Each person who is resident in Sweden must be registered. A person who moves to Sweden is registered if he or she is contemplating residence in Sweden for at least one year. For a person who is a citizen of a non-Nordic country, it is also normally required that he or she is in possession of a residence permit. All children born in Sweden are registered with the exception of the children of foreign diplomats and other persons in a similar position.

A person who leaves Sweden to take up residence abroad for at least one year is deregistered from the population register.



## Place of registration

A person is registered at the property and in the parish in which he or she is resident. Under the Population Registration Act, a person is considered to be resident at the property where he or she regularly sleeps or takes the equivalent period of rest. The law also specifies rules for where a person should be considered to be resident in various special situations, e.g. if due to work a person is partially resident at a location other than with the family.

On request, the population register can record a separate postal address in addition to the address at which the person is resident.

## Change of address verification

For the population register to be able to fulfil its function in society it is important that it has an up-to-date record of where people are living. The Tax Authority is obliged to check that people are actually registered where they are resident. To facilitate this procedure, certain other authorities, e.g. the Social Insurance Office and the Enforcement Service, inform the Tax Authority when it comes to their knowledge that a person can be considered to have an address not recorded in the population register.

The Tax Authority is entitled to request information from property owners and others involved in renting or mediating residential property about the people living at the property or residence. The authorities also have the possibility, through employers or municipal bodies responsible for water and refuse collection, to obtain details of where a person is residing.

Normally the Tax Authority decides on a change of a person's population registration when that person submits details of a change of address. However, the authority can decide on a change without such notification if a check indicates that a person has moved. In such a situation the person must always be given the opportunity to submit an explanation.



## Birth

In Sweden the majority of children are born at a hospital or a similar institution. The hospital or institution is obliged to report the birth to the Tax

Authority as soon as possible. The same obligation applies to a midwife who assists at a birth in another location. A birth that takes place in another location without the involvement of a midwife should be reported by the child's guardian within one month.

Notification of the birth is sent to the Tax Authority within whose area the mother is registered. If the mother is not registered in Sweden, notification is sent to the Tax Authority office in the area in which the child was born.

## Parents

The child's mother is registered based on the notification of the birth. If the mother is married, her husband is registered as the child's father. If she is not married, paternity must be legally established before the father can be registered. This can be done by means of the father signing a written statement confirming paternity, which should be approved by the mother and the Social Welfare Committee. The Social Welfare Committee then sends this confirmation to the Tax Authority.

Paternity can also be established through a decision of the court. Notification of the decision is then sent by the court to the Tax Authority. The same applies if a court decides that the mother's husband is not the father of her child.

## Custody of children

If the parents are married to each other they are both registered automatically as the child's guardians. If the mother is not married, only the mother is registered as the guardian. The parents can then request that the Tax Authority registers joint custody. Custody can then only be changed through a court order. In the event of such, the court should inform the Tax Authority of the decision.

The child is in the custody of the parents until he or she reaches the age of 18 or marries prior to this.

## Adoption

An adoption takes place in Sweden by means of a decision of the court. The court informs the Tax Authority about the decision. The person who has adopted the child is registered in the population register. However, details of the natural parents still remain.



## Name

In Sweden, every person has a surname and one or more forenames. In addition, there is sometimes a middle name. In many cases a name is acquired or changed by means of an application to the Tax Authority.

The children of parents with the same surname acquire this name automatically at birth. If the parents have different surnames, the child acquires the name reported by the parents within three months of the birth. If the parents do not submit such notification, the child acquires the mother's surname automatically, three months after birth.

A child who has acquired a surname which only one of the parents bears can retain the second parent's surname as a middle name.

The parents are obliged to report the name or names of the child within three months of birth. In certain cases the Tax Authority can refuse to approve a forename, for example if the name could be an embarrassment to the child.

Those who marry should report the surname they have chosen at the wedding. They can state the husband's or the wife's name as a joint surname or they can each retain their former names. In the latter case, one of the spouses can take the other's surname as a middle name. The one that changes to the spouse's surname can have his or her previous surname as a middle name.

Within certain limits a person can change his name by applying to the Tax Authority. For example, a person has one opportunity to remove or change all his/her forenames, except one, or change his/her surname to the surname of a parent.

Otherwise, changing a name is done by means of an application to a special authority, the Patent and Registration Office. When this authority has approved a change of name, it notifies the Tax Authority.

## Citizenship

In the case of a foreign citizen, the citizenship/citizenships of the person is/are registered. For a Swedish citizen, only the Swedish citizenship is registered even if the person is also a citizen of another country.

When a foreigner has acquired Swedish citizenship, the authority that made the decision (the Swedish Immigration Board or the County Administration Board) reports the decision to the Tax Authority.



## Marriage

Under Swedish law, the requirements for marriage are that the person has attained the age of 18 and that he or she is not already married or closely related to the prospective spouse (parent-child, sibling). A half-sister or half-brother can marry each other with the consent of the government. A person under the age of 18 can enter into marriage following approval by the County Administration Board.

Prospective spouses should request a certificate from the Tax Authority certifying that there are no impediments to their marriage. This certificate, which is issued after checking the population register, is valid for four months and should be presented to the person conducting the marriage. The marriage can be conducted by a minister of the Church of Sweden or of another denomination

entitled to conduct marriages. It can also be conducted by a judge or other person holding a position that carries the right to conduct a marriage.

A person conducting the marriage ceremony should send notification of the marriage to the Tax Authority.

When a court pronounces judgment in a divorce or annuls a marriage, the court sends notification of this to the Tax Authority.



## Death

A death that occurs in Sweden must be registered irrespective of whether the dead person was registered in Sweden or not. A person who is registered is deregistered from the population register following death.

For a death to be registered, a doctor must have issued a death certificate. If the deceased person at the time of death was admitted to a medical institution or brought there following death, the institution should submit a death certificate to the Tax Authority. In other cases the death certificate should be submitted by the issuing doctor.

The remains of the deceased person may not be cremated or buried before the crematorium authorities, or those responsible for cemetery administration, have received a certificate from the Tax Authority with details of the deceased person and the time of death. Burial or cremation must take place within two months of death.

If the remains have been cremated, the burial must take place within one year. Notification of burial or

cremation must be sent to the Tax Authority which must also check whether this has taken place within the prescribed time. In the event of a delay, the Tax Authority should investigate the reason for the delay and possibly inform the municipal authority where the deceased person was last registered. The municipal authority must assume responsibility for burial or cremation of the deceased person if there is no other person to do this.

## Notification to the population register

Decisions in population registration matters are made by the Tax Authority within whose area the person referred to in the decision is registered. A decision concerning new registration after moving is made by the Tax Authority in the area to which the person has moved. Notification to the population register can be submitted to any Tax Authority office which will then forward it to the office responsible.

Notification to the population register can also be submitted to any Social Insurance Office which will then forward it to the Tax Authority office making the decision. The Social Insurance Office has many local offices around the country and it is considered good service to also accept notifications and provide assistance with completing the necessary forms.

Notification concerning a change of address within the country can also be handed in to any post office, e.g. at the same time that the person moving requests mail to be forwarded to the new address.

Notification to the population register must be in writing.



## **If the prescribed notification is not made**

Failure to report to the Tax Authority something which a person is obliged to report, e.g. the name of a child, can result in a fine.

## **Right to details from the population register**

It has been natural for a long time in Sweden for the authorities' activities to be monitored and debated by the people. This has been considered to be so important and so basic to society that the right of the general public and the media to have access to and an insight into the activities of authorities has been included in the Swedish constitution under the Freedom of the Press Act. This basic right is known as the open access principle.

The open access principle means, among other things, that the general public is normally entitled to examine documents held by the authorities. However, in certain cases there must be exceptions

to this principle, such as with particularly sensitive information. These exceptions are stated in a special Secrecy Act.

For the population registration authority the access principle means that anyone normally has the right to examine details recorded in the population register. The exceptions are stated in the Secrecy Act if it is considered that special reasons exist where details would cause harm if they were revealed. An example could be where the address of someone who is being threatened or persecuted is revealed.

## **Right of appeal against a Tax Authority decision**

A person who is dissatisfied with a decision of the Tax Authority, e.g. because he has been refused registration in a place where he considers himself to be resident, can appeal against the decision. Depending on the background to the case, a decision can be reviewed on three judicial levels, the highest being the Supreme Administrative Court.

# EDP systems in the population registration process

## Background

EDP technology was first used for population registration in 1966. The original system was modified in 1980. This subsystem is still being used (1993) in the overall population registration system for the distribution of information to external users. On July 1, 1991, a completely new EDP system was introduced.

The introduction of computerised population registration meant that the tax administration could work more effectively as the tax system was the first to receive information from the automated population register. However, more and more official registers were updated relatively quickly with addresses and information about marital status. Personal identity numbers were used more and became the most common means of identifying a person both in official and non-official registers.

Having the population register as a source of information from which other authorities can obtain details is a powerful administrative tool. It offers excellent opportunities for making administrative savings as well as offering a high level of security for those functions in society that affect a person's rights and obligations.

## Transfer to automatic registration in 1991

Prior to July 1, 1991, the parish office recorded all population registration matters for each person in a manual register in a so-called personal file. A personal file followed the person throughout his or her life and moved to the new parish office if the person moved. The switch from these manual files to the new automated files entailed extensive registration work in autumn 1990 and spring 1991. All personal files, approximately 9 million, were copied. Roughly six million of these were then processed by population registration experts. The personal files prepared, which on average contained 350 characters, were finally registered in the computer. The remaining files were gradually registered by the population registration staff after July 1, 1991.

## Use

The EDP system that existed up to July 1, 1991 could only be used to a limited extent as support in the handling process and was used primarily to circulate population registration information to other users in society.

The system introduced on July 1, 1991 is used to

- interactively support the handling of cases
- register and store all population registration information
- circulate population registration information to other users in society.

The new computer system provides limited support when making legal interpretations. Decisions and the final interpretation must be made by the person handling the case.

## Register contents

The population register contains the following information:

- personal identity number
- name
- address
- county, municipal area, parish, property
- marital status and date
- parents, children, spouses
- place of birth
- citizenship
- secrecy
- immigration and emigration.

## System structure

The population registration system in 1993 consists of the following:

### Local registers

There are 131 different registers, one at each local tax office. The registers are spread out over 39 host computers located at the Tax Authority offices. Each Tax Authority office has at least one host computer.

The staff dealing with the cases at each local tax office only have terminal access to their own local register.

The local population register is used for dealing with population registration cases and the issue of register extracts. All population registration information, both historical and current, is stored for those people registered in the area served by the tax office.

### Regional registers

There are 24 different registers. However, operation takes place at a few locations.

There is no terminal access to the regional registers. The regional population registers are used for circulation of information in the population register to other users. Only certain current population registration information is stored for those persons registered in the area served by the Tax Authority.

### Central reference register

The central reference register is located at the National Tax Board. It is in a host computer to which all population registration staff have terminal access. A reference register is used to allocate personal identity numbers and to provide information concerning the local tax office to which a person belongs. The personal identity number, name and local tax office are stored for all people who are or have been registered in Sweden. The reference register also contains a register of all personal identity numbers, both used and unused.

The National Tax Board is responsible for developing and administering the population registration systems. There are two other computers for this purpose at the National Tax Board.

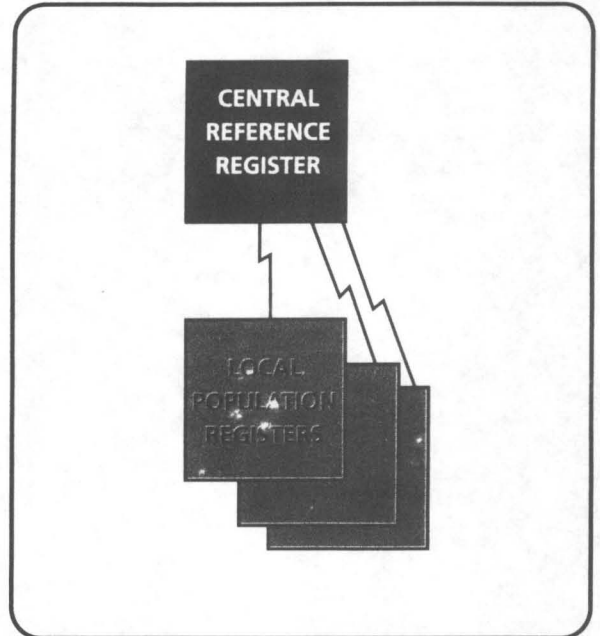
The different population registers interact in different ways with each other by day, at night or on a weekly basis or periodic basis.

Daily contact only takes place between the central reference register and each local population register. This communication is on-line. A registration made in the local population register is updated immediately.

Nightly contact takes place between the different local population registers and also between the local register and the central reference register. All night-time contact is in the form of block processing.

### Daily contact

Population identity cases are registered and updated immediately in the local population register. The reasonableness of information registered is checked at the time of registration.



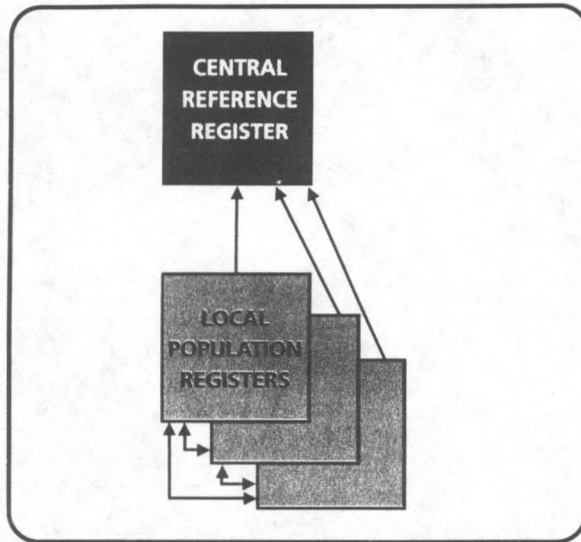
Along with the case at hand, notification to the persons affected is also dealt with.

Register extracts ordered by telephone, letter or personal visit are retrieved immediately.

When necessary, a manual or automatic search is made in the central reference register for a name or to check in which local register a person can be found.

In the case of registration of births and immigration a new personal identity number is produced automatically from the personal identity number register in the central reference register. The personal identity number is booked out at the same time, i.e. registered as used.

### Night-time contact



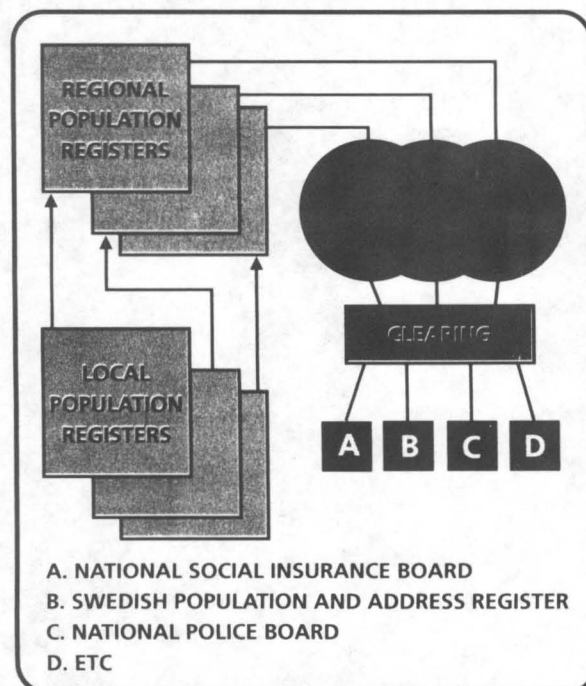
The central reference register is updated with the previous day's changes in the local population registers. The local population registers are updated with details of those people who have moved in or moved out.

The local population registers are notified of events in other registers that can affect them.

### Weekly contact

The local and regional population registers are processed in blocks on a weekly basis.

The leadtime in this weekly update from the point at which the information has been registered in the



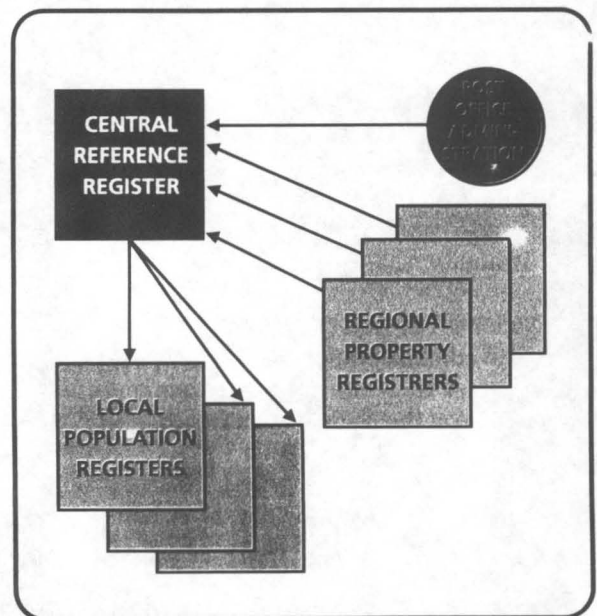
local register until it can be found in the information recipient's register is between two and four weeks.

The regional population registers are updated with the details registered in the local population registers in the regions during the previous week.

Details of changes are analysed based on the different demands of the information recipient. An updating item is created for each recipient. Recipients of information could include authorities, schools and hospitals on the local and regional level and even on the central level - Statistics Sweden and the other Tax Authority systems.

Items for central information recipients that need to be updated are collected and forwarded immediately to the Tax Authority in Härnösand which operates a clearing system. Details are collected in the clearing system from all the regional registers and sorted according to recipient.

### Periodic contact



The local population registers interact in the form of block processing:

- Once or twice a month with the Tax Authority's regional property taxation register and with the National Maritime Administration and the National Service Administration.
- Annually with the Post Office.



The central reference register is used to localise the people concerned.

Property tables and the local population registers are updated with new, partitioned and deleted properties.

The properties recorded in the population register for the persons concerned are changed.

Postal codes, postal districts and street address tables in the local population register are updated with new and amended details.

The postal addresses of the people concerned are changed.

The National Maritime Administration maintains a register of all seamen. The regional population register is notified of new seamen added to the register and those who have been removed.

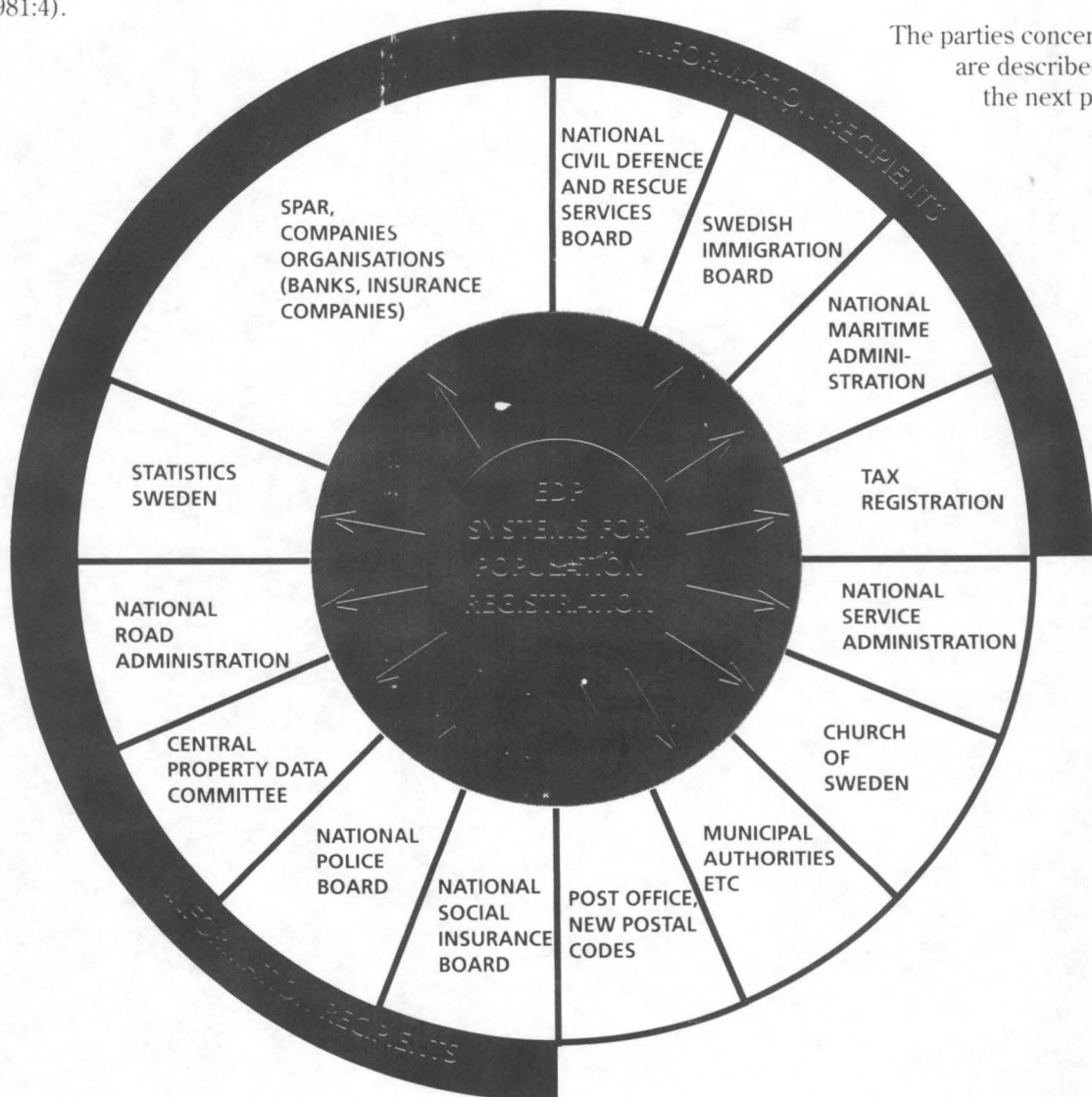
The National Service Administration maintains a register of details of people within the total defence system. These are allocated a code in the regional population registers. Notification is made of the people whose codes are to be changed.

## Information recipients

Those entitled to receive information from the population register are statutorily regulated by Section 8 of the Swedish Population and Address Register Act (1981:4).

A basic principle is that users should only be notified of those details and those persons necessary for their particular field of activity.

The parties concerned are described on the next page.



### **Tax Authority**

There is a central tax register at the National Tax Board which contains the names of all people registered in Sweden. All Tax Authority offices have terminal access to this register. The National Tax Board is notified each week of changes in the population registration circumstances to allow the register to be updated.

### **Police authorities**

The National Police Board is notified each week of changes in population registration information to allow the police systems and the judicial information system to be updated. They can also retrieve basic information for the passport system by means of terminals linked to SPAR (see below).

### **Central Property Data Board**

Changes in population registration information for property owners are reported to the Central Property Data Committee each week.

### **National Road Administration**

The National Road Administration maintains a register of car-owners and holders of driving licences. All registered changes of name and address are reported each week for updating.

### **Statistics Sweden**

All changes in the population register are reported each week to the Central Statistics Office.

### **National Social Insurance Board**

Entitlement to child benefit, sickness benefit and retirement pension is based in principle on the details in the population register. The National Tax Board is notified each week of changes to allow the registers to be updated.

### **Swedish Population and Address Register**

A separate register with a limited selection of population registers was created in 1976 to satisfy commercial and other non-official needs for population registration information. This register was created for reasons of integrity and to limit the number of personal registers used for these purposes. The register is used by many companies and organisations for direct advertising campaigns and to update customer registers. SPAR is notified each week of changes in the population register.

### **National Service Administration**

All changes in the population registration information for people with a separate code for the National Service Administration are reported each week. The National Service Administration forwards such information to the National Civil Defence and Rescue Services Board.

### **Swedish Immigration Board**

All immigration of foreign citizens and changes in the population registration details for non-Nordic citizens are reported each week to the Swedish Immigration Board.

### **The National Maritime Administration**

Changes in the population register for those persons registered as seamen are reported each week to the National Maritime Administration.

### **Church of Sweden**

All changes in the population register details are reported each week to allow the parish registers of the Church of Sweden to be updated.

# Sweden

