

Politics Sweden



Sweden Constitutional Reform

Democratic breakthrough

1917	Parliamentary government
1918-1921	Universal and equal suffrage
1922	First women in parliament

But only minor changes in the constitution

The Riksdag Act, art. 16

Before 1921

The right to vote is granted every man who is a Swedish subject...

After 1921

The right to vote is granted every man and woman who is a Swedish subject...

The Instrument of Government, art. 4

Before 1921

The King alone shall govern the Realm...

After 1921

The King alone shall govern the Realm...

The constitution-less half-century

The modernization of Sweden 1920–1970

Universal suffrage

Parliamentary government

Popular movements

Welfare society

The Instrument of Government 1809

“The constitution-less half-century.”

Professor Fredrik Sterzel

Written text

Unwritten constitution



How to modernize a constitution

Constitutional commission 1954

Författningsutredningen

Alternative 1
Modernize the old constitution
Norway 1814

Alternative 2
Write a new constitution



Falkenberg, late 1950s

Draft constitution 1963

Constitutional commission I 1954–1963

Instrument of Government

One of several fundamental laws

Codify the unwritten constitution

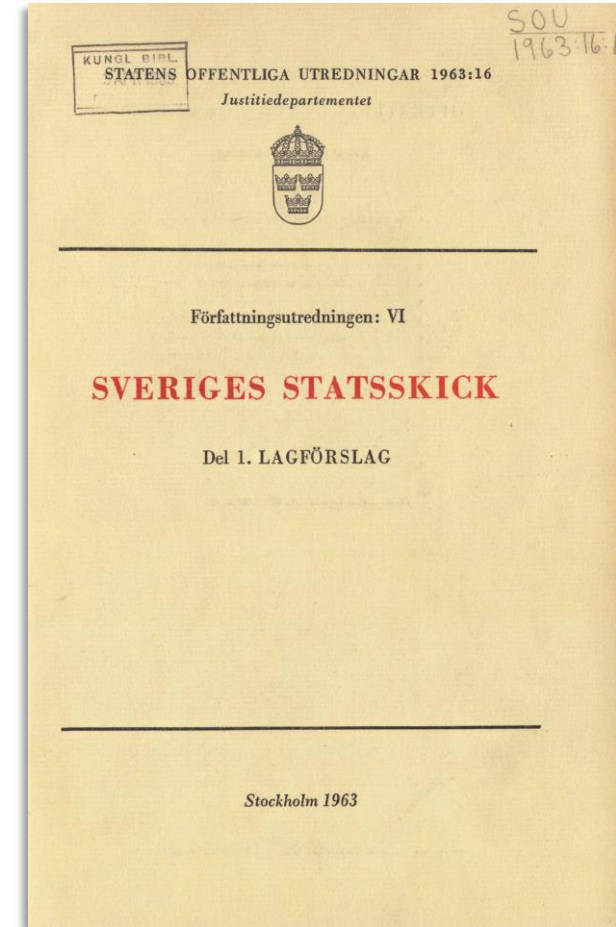
Controversy

One or two chambers?

Election system?

The monarchy?

Bill of rights?



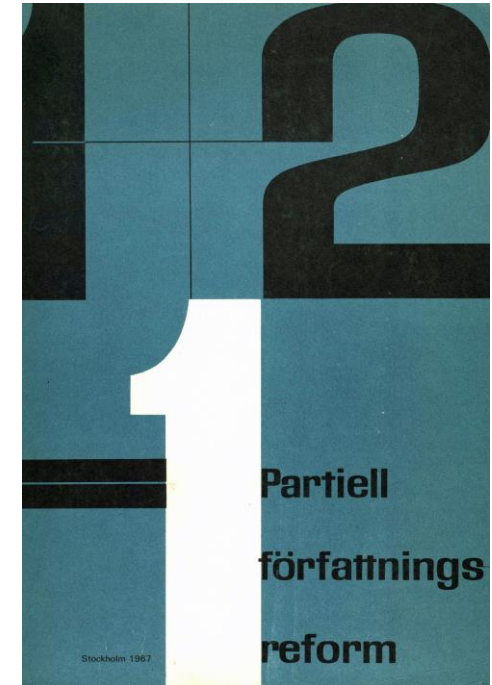
Partial reform 1970

Constitutional commission II 1966–1972

Grundlagberedningen

Partial reform

- One chamber with 350 members (later 349)
- Proportional election system, 4 % threshold
- Election period 3 year (later back to 4 years)
- Simultaneous elections: national, regional, local
- Parliamentary government: vote of no confidence



A new constitution 1974

Constitutional commission II 1966–1972

Grundlagberedningen

The Instrument of Government 1974

Popular sovereignty

Bill of rights

Parliament, head of state, government

Legislation, budget, international relations

Courts of law, public administration

Parliamentary control

War and danger of war



Codifying the unwritten constitution

Descriptive constitution

Swedish politics

Popular sovereignty

Proportional representation

Concentration of power

Against interpretation

Descriptive constitution

Parliamentary control

Frequent adjustments

Reduce the need for interpretation

Bill of rights

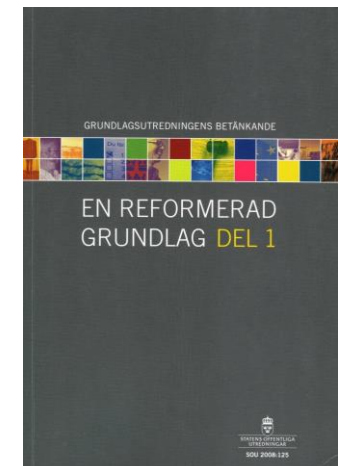
Rights and freedom

Bill of rights

Strength of protection

Special amendmend procedure

Proportionality



Constitutional amendments 1975–2010

Rights and freedoms

Election period

Preference voting for individual candidates

Independent central bank

National audit office

EU membership

War and danger of war

End of state church system



Constitutional amendments 1975–2010

Rights and freedoms
Election period
Preference voting for individual candidates
Independent central bank
National audit office
EU membership
War and danger of war
End of state church system

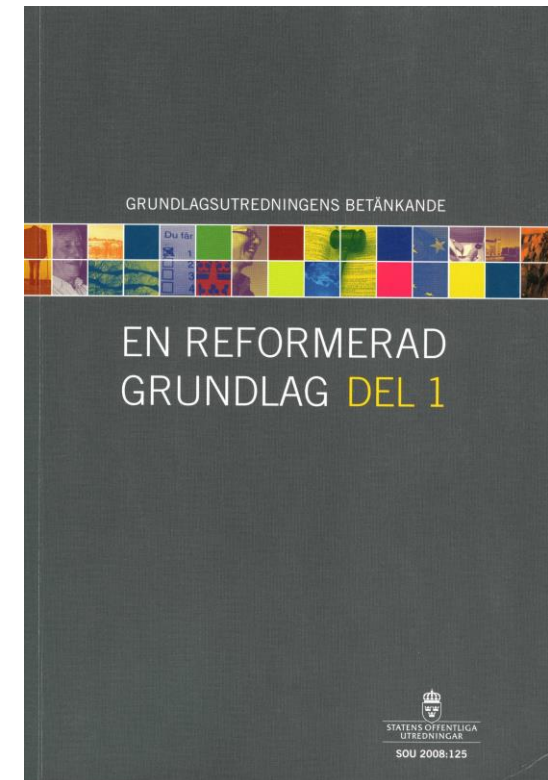


Major revision 2010

Constitutional commission 2004–2008

Linguistic revision, subtitles
Rights and freedoms
Courts of law
Public administration
Local self-government

Grundlagsutredningen



Writing the unwritten

Codifying is difficult

Codifying reality may change reality

Good intentions may have unintended consequences

Politics Sweden

www.youtube.com

www.olofpetersson.se/politicssweden

politicssweden@gmail.com



Photo: Göteborgs-Posten

Gunnar Pettersson
Author, translator
Göteborg, London
www.pressyltaredux.com

Olof Petersson
Professor political science
Göteborg, Uppsala, Stockholm
www.olofpetersson.se

Updated 09 November 2019