

# ACC DOCKET

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## Learn Your World: Sweden

### Skills and Professional Development



To support your global practice, ACC Docket offers country-specific fun facts from your peers who've been there — literally.



### **Economy**

GDP (purchasing power parity in USD)

US\$522 billion (2017 estimate)

### **Population**

10,065,389 (2017 census)

### **Corruption**

According to Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perception Index, Sweden ranked 4th "cleanest" (i.e., least corrupt) out of the 176 countries surveyed.

### **Additional Resources**

[Sweden's official tourism and travel information](#)

*The Emigrants* by Vilhelm Moberg, first published in 1949, tells the story of a Swedish group of emigrants leaving a very poor part of Sweden for America in 1850, a time when a big wave of emigrants left Sweden to try their luck in the United States. The musical *Kristina from Duvemåla* is based on this book (a musical by the ABBA members Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson).

If you find yourself in Sweden for business, you will likely feel comfortable. However, it is important to remember there are subtle differences between Swedes and other Europeans. In general, English proficiency is high and it is the preferred language for negotiations in most large companies. Punctuality is extremely important for both business and social meetings. Attire is smart but casual

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for both sexes — men often wear smart suits without the formality of a tie.

Gifts are not usually expected for business meetings but, if supplied, they should be of low value. However, if you are invited to someone's house, a small gift such as flowers or chocolates is expected. If you are seated beside the hostess, don't forget that you are expected to give a small thank you speech.

Jantelagen, the law of Jante, is a Scandinavian concept that is very much a part of Swedes' psyche. Generally, this means you should not consider yourself to be better than others. This exists in everyday life and in business. All employees, irrespective of their position, expect to be addressed and to address others in an equal manner. Decisions are usually made collectively— which is often referred to as a consensus culture. This can take time, so be prepared.

This also means that negotiations are carried out without open confrontation. Aggressive negotiation with raised voices is considered impolite and disrespectful. When negotiating, Swedes expect you to be realistic in your approach and that common ground should be reached without too much fuss. A Swede would start price negotiations fairly close to what is expected to be the final result. If you counter with a price far from the expected middle ground, you will likely be considered uninterested in doing the business and/or untrustworthy.

If you have time after business is conducted, and are lucky enough to be invited to a country house or cottage, don't miss the opportunity! Sweden is Europe's fourth biggest country by area. Swedes love the countryside and most have a country house or cottage in the family. There, you will see Swedes at their most relaxed: open, friendly, and generous.

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