

Sweden's International Adoption Activities – Lessons and the Way Forward

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1. The Assignment

- Investigate and clarify the existence of irregularities in Swedish international adoptions and how Swedish actors
- Analyse regulation, organisation, processes, and roles of various actors.
- Investigate the need for adoption-specific support and propose assistance.
- Determine how the child rights perspective and legal security can be strengthened.

2. Irregularities Have Occurred in International Adoptions to Sweden

- Confirmed cases of child trafficking from the 1970s to 2000s, especially in private adoptions.
- Some children were adopted without voluntary and informed parental consent.
- Falsified data and errors in adoption documents.
- Lack of documentation on the child.

3. The Child's Best Interests Have Not Always Been Ensured

- Swedish actors failed to ensure proper availability of children for adoption.
- Key information for origin knowledge often missing.

4. Inadequate Response from Swedish Actors to Irregularities

- Oversight bodies and adoption agencies received ongoing reports of irregularities.
- Early government awareness of issues in private adoptions.
- Some action taken but insufficient.
- Failure to seek information or critically assess irregularities.

5–6. Explanations for the Deficiencies

- Goal was to facilitate adoptions.
- High trust among Swedish and foreign partners.
- High risk tolerance.
- Regulations not designed to prevent irregularities.
- Adoption agencies had wide autonomy.
- Oversight bodies lacked tools and interpreted their mission narrowly.
- Social boards and courts had major but unclear roles.
- 1993 Hague Convention ratification did not improve legal safeguards.

7. Measures in Response to Identified Irregularities

- Sweden should ratify the Convention on Enforced Disappearance.
- Public apology for human rights violations and consequences for adoptees and their families.

8. Long-Term Adoption-Specific Support for Adoptees and Families

- National resource centre for adoptees.
- Adoption-specific counselling, origin search support, and irregularities support.
- Online advice and legal/DNA/archive guidance.
- Experience-sharing forums and education for relatives and professionals.

9. Travel Grants and National DNA Database

- Travel grants for adoptees to return to origin countries (up to SEK 14,700).
- Task Rättsmedicinalverket and MFoF with investigating national DNA database.

10. The Future of International Adoption

- Recommend ending child mediation for adoption to Sweden.
- Sharp decline in adoption globally.
- Adoptions hinder long-term development in origin countries.
- Risk of irregularities remains.
- Not sustainable as a child protection measure.

11. Strengthened Oversight of Cross-Border Adoptions

- State must ensure adoptions are in child's best interest and legally secure.
- MFoF grants permission for international adoptions.
- MFoF assesses process reliability.
- Swedish courts may only review applications with MFoF approval.