

## 9 Adoption-specific support

## 9.1 The assignment

According to the directives, the Adoption Commission shall investigate the need for adoption-specific support, propose what assistance and support measures should be offered and how these should be organised. The Adoption Commission shall also submit proposals on what measures the Government, state authorities and adoption agencies in Sweden should take when information about irregularities in international adoption activities comes to light. The Commission shall also propose the necessary constitutional amendments and other measures.

The ~~starting~~ point for the investigator's work shall be the rights of the child in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1993 Hague Convention.

## 9.2 Introduction

According to Article 9 of the 1993 Hague Convention, central authorities shall promote counselling in adoption matters and opportunities for assistance and support after adoption. According to the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), states must do everything in their power to fulfil this obligation, which includes meeting the needs of both adoptees and their families.<sup>(2)</sup> In addition, both international and Swedish law contain provisions concerning the right of adoptees to their origins and identity.

The term adoption-specific support, or Post Adoption Services (PAS), often refers to support provided to adoptees and their parents before, during and after an adoption. This chapter

<sup>1</sup> Dir. 2021:95 *Swedish national adoption activities – the past and the way forward*, pp. 10, and 12.

<sup>2</sup> HCCH (2008), *The Implementation and Operation of the 1993 Hague Intercountry Adoption Convention*. Grsde No.t, p. 125.

is about support after adoption, primarily for adopted persons but also, to some extent, for adoptive parents. Adoption-specific support therefore mainly refers to measures aimed at adopted persons to meet needs that can be traced back in various ways to circumstances linked to the adoption. However, the support needs of adopted persons may vary and do not necessarily have to be specific to adopted persons.

### **9.3 Overall assessment of the need for support**

**The investigator's assessment:** The support currently available to internationally adopted persons is not sufficient to meet their needs. Internationally adopted persons need to be offered better support in searching for their origins and better psychosocial support. There is also a need for some financial support for internationally adopted persons who want to search for their origins. Knowledge and expertise about adoptees and adoption-related issues also need to increase in society, especially among professional groups who meet adoptees who may be in need of support. This includes social services, child and adolescent psychiatry and adult psychiatry, as well as other health and medical care, preschools and schools.

### **9.3.1 It has long been known that adopted persons may need special support**

**Several research studies have shown that adopted persons may be in need of special support**

A number of previous studies and reports have shown that adopted persons need special support and that they do not have access to adequate support and treatment. As early as the 1980s, research showed the need for special support for internationally adopted persons. In the mid-1990s, a report from the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care (SiS) showed that young people who had been adopted from another country were overrepresented among those enrolled in special

youth homes. They were often admitted due to mental health problems.<sup>3</sup> In the late 1990s, researcher Anders Hjern drew attention to the group of adoptees in a public health study on children of foreign origin in Stockholm.<sup>4</sup> This marked the beginning of further research. <sup>5</sup> A study from 2002 showed that people who had been adopted from another country had higher suicide rates and a significantly increased risk of mental illness and substance abuse.

In 2001, the government assessed that social services and child and adolescent psychiatry (BUP) did not have sufficient knowledge about the specific problems that adopted persons could experience, especially during adolescence. The government also pointed out that only larger municipalities had the capacity to build up knowledge and experience of the support needs of adopted persons and to offer special counselling for children. The government therefore commissioned a report to propose measures that would better meet the needs of adoptive families.<sup>6</sup> The research review commissioned by the inquiry into international adoption issues shows that adoptees

These individuals were overrepresented in clinical groups in terms of mental health problems, relationship problems, school problems and antisocial behaviour. The older the child was at the time of adoption, the greater the risk of mental health and social adjustment problems. Adolescence and early adulthood were periods of increased difficulty due to identity problems.<sup>7</sup> However, the government did not submit any proposals for support in the subsequent bill. We do not know the reason for this. The investigator for the 2003 adoption inquiry states that one reason may be that the inquiry's proposals were not sufficiently concrete and that they did not propose any funding.<sup>8</sup>

Two decades later, in 2021, the government once again pointed out that greater expertise is needed to address the higher levels of mental ill health among adopted persons compared to the general population. The government

<sup>3</sup> National Board of Institutional Care (1996), *Adoption, guardianship and care. Documentation from a conference held on 5 April 1996, organised by Foläsa treatment centre*. General SiS report 1996:4.

<sup>4</sup> A. Hjern (1998), *Msigtatson tsll segtegatson – a public health loss concerning children with foreign backgrounds in Stockholm*, Centre for Child and Adolescent Health. Community Medicine, Stockholm County Council.

<sup>5</sup> A. Hjern, F. Lindblad and B. Vinnerljung (2002), Suicide, psychiatric illness, and social maladjustment in intercountry adoptees in Sweden: a cohort study. *The Lancet*. Vol. 360, No. 9331, 10 August 2002, pp. 443–448. *Läkartidningen*. Vol. 100, No. 9, 2003, pp. 707–709.

<sup>6</sup> Dir. 2001:93 *International adoptions, etc.*

<sup>7</sup> SOU 2003:49 *Adoption – what is it? Volume 2 Summary of adoption statistics*, pp. 11 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with the special investigator for the 2003 adoption investigation, 20 February 2024.

No one therefore commissioned the National Board of Health and Welfare to investigate how healthcare and social services meet the adoption-specific needs of adopted persons. In its 2022 report, the National Board of Health and Welfare notes that the vast majority of people who have been adopted internationally have a positive social, cognitive and emotional adjustment, while research shows that as a group they are at higher risk than others for serious mental and social ill health and suicide. According to the National Board of Health and Welfare the reasons for this are linked to the conditions in which they grew up before adoption, as well as the adoptive parents' preparedness and access to adequate support for the adoptee. The National Board of Health and Welfare's interviews with organisations for adoptees, adoption organisations and representatives of the profession also showed that adoptees have increased vulnerability due to upheaval, separations and other events that can cause various types of trauma. This, in turn, can lead to attachment issues that affect the adoptee throughout their life. If the child's needs have not been met, this can lead to, for example, mental ill health, risky behaviour, addiction problems and self-harming behaviour in adulthood.

In 2021, the Swedish Agency for Family Law and Parental Support (MFoF) commissioned researchers Anders Hjern and Bo Vinnerljung to conduct a register-based study on the health and social living conditions of internationally adopted persons in adulthood. The aim was to follow up on studies conducted 20 years earlier, which showed that internationally adopted persons had a significantly increased risk of psychiatric care and suicide during adolescence and young adulthood. The study compares internationally adopted persons with a group of refugees and native Swedes with a Swedish background. The results of the study show that the increased need for psychiatric care among internationally adopted persons continues into adulthood. Compared with refugees and Swedish-born persons, internationally adopted persons had been treated more often in psychiatric care after the age of 18. Internationally adopted persons were overrepresented in terms of depression, substance abuse, psychotic disorders, suicidal behaviour and other self-harm. The study also showed that internationally adopted persons find it more difficult than others to establish and maintain relationships.

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<sup>9</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (2022), *Health and social services and social services meeting the specific needs of adoptees* , p. 7 ff.

<sup>10</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (2022), p. 56 ff.

and are more likely to live alone in adulthood, which increases the risk of depression and suicide. According to the researchers, the study shows a need for state support for both adoptive families and adopted persons.<sup>11</sup>

### **Adoptees have experienced more risk factors for mental ill health than others**

Our mental health is influenced by a variety of factors, such as hereditary vulnerability, conditions during childhood, our financial and social situation, habits and behaviours, ability to cope with stress, and more.<sup>12</sup> Factors that affect mental health are sometimes referred to as protective factors and risk factors. The more risk factors a person is exposed to, the greater the risk of developing mental ill health.<sup>13</sup>

Research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) shows that difficult events during childhood increase the risk of physical and mental ill health later in life.<sup>14</sup> ACE increases the risk of illness and premature death from a range of common diseases, such as severe mental ill health, cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. The more negative childhood experiences, the greater the risk of negative consequences. The fact that negative childhood experiences early in life can have such serious consequences is linked to the severe, so-called toxic stress that affects the child's central nervous system and other organs during their development into adulthood. Negative childhood experiences have a profound negative impact on people's lives and health well into adulthood and can also affect the next generation.<sup>(15)</sup>

Many people who have been adopted internationally have experienced several difficult events early in life, such as separation from their parents, changes in caregivers, and mental and physical abuse. Many also report racism, discrimination and

<sup>11</sup> A. Hjern and B. Vinnerljung (2022), *Health and social conditions among nationally adopted children of adolescent age*, p. 42 ff.

<sup>12</sup><https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/livsvillkor-levnadsvanor/psykisk-halsa-och-suicidprevention/vad-paverkar-var-psykiska-halsa/>. Retrieved 2024-12-20.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/livsvillkor-levnadsvanor/psykisk-halsa-och-suicide-prevention/what-affects-our-mental-health/>. Retrieved 2024-12-20.

<sup>14</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021), *Advetsve Chsldhood Expetsences Pteventionn Stratgy*. Atlanta, GA: National Centre for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<sup>15</sup> S-O. Andersson et al. (2021), *Advetsve Chsldhood Expetsences ate assocsated wsth chosce of pattnet, both pattnets' telationship and psychosocsl health as teported one yeat astet bstth of a common chsld. A cross-sectsonal strdy*.

exclusion that begins in school and continues into adulthood. The fact that adopted people are often exposed to several such risk factors increases their vulnerability, which can manifest itself at different stages of the adopted person's life, for example in connection with changes or life crises. Becoming a teenager, establishing a relationship, becoming a parent or losing a close relative are some examples of situations that can place extra strain on an adopted person. Access to professional support in such life situations reduces the risk of future ill health.

### **9.3.2 Some adoption-specific support is already available**

Today, certain adoption-specific support is offered by social services, health care and MFoF. The Adoption Centre (AC) and organisations for adoptees also offer support to adopted persons.

According to Chapter 5, Section 1, Point 9 of the Social Services Act<sup>(16)</sup> social services have a special responsibility to provide support and assistance to adopted children and their families after an adoption. They must meet the needs of adoptive families for support and counselling. However, the social services' special responsibility for supporting adoptees does not include adult adoptees. In addition, both the social services and the health and medical care services have an overall responsibility to offer the support and care that the individual needs.

This means that primary care, school health services, youth clinics and child and adolescent psychiatric services, for example, have an overall responsibility to provide the support and care that adopted children and their families need, based on their respective mandates. Social services do not have any specific responsibility for providing support in searching for origins, but according to the MFoF's general advice, they should offer advice and support when an adopted person requests access to information about their adoption. Social services should also provide information on where to turn to find out more about one's origins.<sup>(17)</sup> The MFoF has published guidelines on searching for one's origins for the country's municipalities in order to strengthen social services' competence and ability to support internationally adopted persons in their search for their origins.

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<sup>16</sup> Chapter 18, Section 10 of the Social Services Act (2025:000), latest version Prop. 2024/25:89 *A preventive in the Social Services Act – for increased security, accountability and opportunity*.

<sup>17</sup> MFoF (2022), *The Authority for Family and Child Support's general guidelines (HSLF-FS 2022:25) on the social services committee's handling of cases concerning intercountry adoption*.

Since 2020, MFoF has had two government assignments aimed at adult adoptees. One is a temporary assignment to provide adoption-specific professional counselling to adoptees over the age of 15, and from 2022 onwards, also to adoptive parents.

Following a tender process, the counselling support has been offered via Apoteksgårdens Kognitiva Center AB. The counselling is free of charge and consists of individual psychotherapeutic support sessions and group sessions conducted by licensed psychotherapists and licensed psychologists. The support is intended to complement regular health care and therefore does not involve treatment, but rather guidance sessions.

The second task of the MFoF is to offer individual support for searching for one's origins. The agency has had temporary government assignments since 2020, but in 2023, long-term funding was secured and the costs of support for searching for one's origins are now included in the agency's regular budget. This support is free of charge and limited to persons over the age of 18. The support primarily consists of guidance in the search process, i.e. help for self-help. <sup>(19)</sup>

Authorised adoption organisations also offer support to adult adoptees. AC has been working with PAS for 30 years, without government support. AC offers conversations for adoptees about feelings and thoughts about being adopted, but not therapeutic counselling. According to AC, they receive about five calls per day. With regard to searching for origins, AC organises workshops on searching for roots and provides some individual support in the disclosure of adoption documents and support for a return trip. AC also arranges group return trips for adoptees and adoptive families who want to search for their biological origins or get to know their country of origin.<sup>20</sup> In some cases, the adoption organisation Barnen Framför Allt (BFA) has also helped people who were adopted through them to establish contact with the relevant authorities, children's homes and organisations in their country of origin in connection with a return trip.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> MFoF (2024), *Slrttappott Adoptsonsspecfskt ptofessionellt samtalsstöd tsll adoptetade och adoptysfötäldat*. Government assignment S2021/08111 (partial). December 2024, pp. 3, 6, 12; Meeting with Apoteksgården on 14 June 2024.

<sup>19</sup> MFoF (2022), *Pilot project with targeted support for nationally adopted children in foster care*. Final report January 2022. Government assignment S2019/05315/RS (partial); MFoF (2024), *Slrttappott. Support for nationally adopted children's right to care*. Government assignment S2021/08111 (partial) January 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Meeting with AC 23 October 2023; MFoF (2022), *Project with support for nationally adopted children seeking parental care*; p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.bfa.se/adopterad/>. Retrieved 21 October 2024.

The adoption organisation Familjeföreningen för Internationell Adoption (FFIA) has a foundation from which adopted persons (primarily those adopted through FFIA) can apply for a grant to return to their country of origin.<sup>22</sup>

Several organisations and networks for adoptees have also gathered information on how adoptees can search for their origins on their websites, and several organisations assist individuals with advice and support in their search for their origins. These include the Swedish Korean Adoptees Network (SKAN), the Organisation for Adult Adoptees and Foster Children (AFO) and Chileadoption.se.

### **9.3.3 Current support is insufficient**

My assessment is that the support currently offered to internationally adopted persons is insufficient. Social services and health care do not have sufficient expertise on adoption-related issues to be able to respond adequately to internationally adopted persons and provide the support they need. In addition, the adoption-specific support currently offered by MFoF is insufficient. There are mixed views on the counselling support currently offered by the authority via Apoteksgården. There are certain problems with trust in the support, and the support needs to be made more accessible. The support provided by MFoF in searching for origins has not always been sufficiently concrete and helpful. Furthermore, far from all internationally adopted persons are aware that this support exists.

### **The existing support within social services and healthcare does not meet the needs that exist**

The National Board of Health and Welfare's overall assessment based on its 2022 survey was that the support and services offered to adoptees and adoptive parents within social services and healthcare do not meet existing needs. The National Board of Health and Welfare's survey shows that the support is fragmented and that there is no overall picture of how adoption-specific needs can be met. There is also a significant lack of follow-up and support after an adoption, which means that needs are often only noticed at school or later in

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.ffia.se/om-ffias-stiftelse/stipendier-och-bidrag.aspx>. Retrieved 2025-04-06.

adolescence and may then have developed into various difficulties. The survey shows that it is difficult for municipalities and regions to maintain adoption-specific expertise and that this is becoming more difficult as the number of adoptions declines. This leads to a lack of experience, which in turn leads to a lack of knowledge and expertise in both social services and health care. The National Board of Health and Welfare's report shows that social services see a need for skills development in the area of adoption, while healthcare services consider that knowledge of attachment issues or diagnoses (depression, ADHD, etc.) is often sufficient to treat adopted persons with mental health problems. Child and adolescent psychiatric services (BUP) and child rehabilitation services do not have any specific support for adopted persons, but instead base their approach on the person's diagnosis. The adoption-specific needs identified by BUP are attachment issues and vulnerability.<sup>23</sup> It is worth noting that Swedish healthcare is generally disease- and diagnosis-driven. This can make it more difficult for healthcare services to focus on issues that are not a disease or diagnosis, such as adoption. According to the National Board of Health and Welfare, social services found it unclear what help, care and support they should provide. The shared responsibility between social services and BUP is another problem, which means that individuals are shunted between different services and often have to wait a long time before receiving help and support. (24)

In May 2024, psychiatrist and researcher Mattias Strand and resident psychiatrist Natte Hillerberg presented an interview study on the experiences and wishes of transnationally adopted individuals regarding care and support. The study shows that there is a need for increased knowledge among therapists and other healthcare professionals, including how adoption trauma, racism and other post-adoption factors affect the health of adopted persons. Several participants emphasised that there is a need for complementary psychotherapeutic approaches in addition to CBT. Another problem highlighted by the participants in the study was the lack of knowledge and interest among healthcare professionals in talking about adoption, as well as a "colour blindness" and unwillingness to talk about racism.

In our interviews, adoptees, psychologists, psychotherapists and researchers also stated that there is too little knowledge

<sup>23</sup> Socialstyrelsen (2022), p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Socialstyrelsen (2022), p. 60 ff.

<sup>25</sup> M. Strand and N. Hillerberg (2024), Transnational adoptees in healthcare: barriers, resources, and needs. *Front. Prblsc Health.* Vol. 12, 22 August 2024.

on adoption-related issues among healthcare professionals who encounter individuals with adoption experience, such as maternal and child healthcare, child and adolescent psychiatry, youth clinics, primary care and specialist care, as well as municipal healthcare. Among other things, it appears that psychiatrists need better knowledge about trauma, racism and understanding of how to treat adopted persons.

### Different perceptions of MFoF's existing counselling support

MFoF's evaluation of the support shows that those who have used it are satisfied. The results of Apoteksgården's online survey of all those who have used the support show a high level of satisfaction with the support. Some of those we interviewed also emphasised that they think the counselling support has worked well and that they have received the support they requested.

Others, however, are more critical of the support. In a letter to the Adoption Commission, associations for adoptees have stated that many adoptees are dissatisfied with the support.<sup>27</sup> This is also evident in a survey conducted by Chileadoption.se among its members in 2023.<sup>28</sup> One problem has been that Apoteksgården has lacked credibility among some internationally adopted persons, largely because the owner and founder of Apoteksgården has a connection to adoption that is perceived as biased.<sup>29</sup> In our interviews, several people also expressed dissatisfaction with the counselling support, citing issues such as a lack of competence and availability. A recurring objection has also been that guidance counselling is not always sufficient, and that some people need to be offered therapy and treatment counselling.

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<sup>26</sup> MFoF (2024), *Slrtappott Adoptionsspecfskt professionellt samtalssstöd tsll adopterade och adoptsyförläldrat*, pp. 3, 8 and 13.

<sup>27</sup> Letter received by the Adoption Commission on 25 February 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Chileadoption.se. Report from a survey of members of Chileadoption.se. Received by the Adoption Commission on 15 January 2024.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Apoteksgården on 14 June 2024; M. Strand and N. Hillerberg (2024).

## Adoptees want more support in searching for their origins than is currently offered

Representatives of MFoF describe how they have been able to help adopted persons in their search for their origins and reunions with their birth families. MFoF also perceives that adopted persons are satisfied with the fact that it is a government agency that provides assistance.<sup>30</sup> In its final reports, MFoF also highlights the need for development and improvement of this support.<sup>31</sup> Our interviews and the documentation we have received indicate that more support is needed in the search for origins than MFoF can currently offer. Some internationally adopted persons are critical of MFoF's support in the search for origins, and many are unaware that the authority offers such support.

Our interviews revealed differing opinions about AC's support in searching for origins. Some adoptees feel that they have received good help from AC. Others are critical, for example, of the fact that AC requires membership in order to provide support in searching for origins and charges a fee for a limited service. Several have also experienced resistance from AC when they have wanted to search for their roots.

Some adoptees have also had difficulty finding their adoption documents and navigating various archives. They are calling for easier access to their adoption documents and guidance on where to find them.

## There is a need for more "neutral" forums for adopted persons to meet, exchange experiences and support each other

Many internationally adopted people want informal support in the form of forums where adoptees can support each other. Simply meeting and reflecting on each other's experiences is described as valuable. Some emphasise the importance of the social aspects and getting together around an activity. Others want more structured discussion meetings with different themes related to adoption. Adopted persons' associations and adoption organisations have arranged meetings for adopted persons and adoptive families, so some forums for exchanging experiences already exist today. MFoF provides

<sup>30</sup> Meeting with MFoF 10 February 2022; Meeting with MFoF 31 May 2023.

<sup>31</sup> MFoF (2022), *Project with targeted support for nationally adopted children seeking parental care. Slrttappott* January 2022; MFoF (2024), *Slrttappott Support for internationally adopted children's search for their birth parents* Government assignment S2021/08111 (partial). January 2024.

There is currently state funding for adoptee associations to promote this type of activity. However, more is needed. Several adoptees have expressed in our interviews and focus groups that it is advantageous if such forums are organised by as neutral a party as possible.

### **Currently, there is no financial support for DNA testing and return travel.**

Many internationally adopted people spend a lot of money on getting help with adoption-related issues. This is evident from our interviews and focus groups, as well as from the interview study on transnationally adopted people's experiences and wishes regarding care and support, published by Mattias Strand and Natte Hillerberg in 2024.<sup>32</sup> The counselling and support in searching for origins that MFoF provides today is free of charge. Some choose to go to a private psychotherapist, partly because of a lack of competence in regular care or to be able to choose a psychotherapist who is themselves adopted or racialised. Searching for one's origins, DNA testing and return trips also cost a lot of money. We have met many internationally adopted people who, for financial reasons, are unable to properly search for their origins or get the psychosocial help they need. There is currently no financial support for DNA testing or return trips to the country of origin. MFoF<sup>(33)</sup>, BFA<sup>(34)</sup> and AC have all highlighted the need for adoptees to receive financial support for a return trip to their country of origin, which in many cases is necessary in order to find their origins.

#### **9.3.4 Summary of how support needs to be improved**

- People who have been adopted internationally need to be better informed about the support available, and there should be a simple and clear route to accessing support so that it reaches everyone who needs it.

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<sup>32</sup> M. Strand and N. Hillerberg (2024).

<sup>33</sup> MFoF (2022), *Pilot project with specialised support for internationally adopted children in foster care*, p. 27; MFoF (2024), *Slrttappott. Support for internationally adopted children rtsprångssöksng* Government assignment S2021/08111 (partial). January 2024, p. 17.

<sup>34</sup> BFA (2018), *Ge relevant stöd till adopterade och deras famsljef*.

<https://www.bfa.se/medlem/adoptionernas-framtid/bfa-stallningstagande-2018/>. Retrieved 2025-04-08.

- Counselling support needs to be made more accessible by offering face-to-face counselling in more locations across the country, and there needs to be greater choice between different providers. The adoption-specific expertise of those providing counselling support needs to be ensured.
- Support in the search for origins needs to be more concrete and helpful. Those providing support need to draw on other actors in order to provide better and more practical support.
- There is a need for more neutral forums for adoptees to meet and exchange experiences.
- Adoptees need easier access to their adoption documents and guidance on where to find them.
- A national DNA database and publicly funded financial assistance for DNA testing are needed.
- There is a need for publicly funded financial assistance for adoptees to return to their country of origin.
- There is a need to improve the skills of professionals who encounter adoptees in their work, as well as to acquire new knowledge.

## 9.4 A resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues

**The investigator's proposal:** The government should establish a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues, which collects and coordinates the adoption-specific support offered by the state. The resource centre should be a clear point of contact for adopted persons who need support, but also for professionals who encounter adopted persons in their work. Adoptive parents and other family members of adoptees should also be able to receive some support. The resource centre should cater to both nationally and internationally adopted persons.

A resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues should offer both direct support to adopted persons and knowledge-enhancing support to relatives, the general public and non-professionals.

at least to professionals who encounter adoptees in their work. Direct support for adoptees should include developed counselling support, support in searching for origins and support in cases of suspected irregularities, but also an informative and guiding web portal and the possibility of general advice by telephone, for example on issues relating to archives, DNA and legal matters. A resource centre should also offer meeting places and forums for adoptees to exchange experiences. Competence-enhancing support for professionals who encounter adoptees in their work should be provided through knowledge dissemination on the web portal, telephone counselling and special competence-enhancing initiatives.

The centre should be nationally managed and coordinated, while certain parts, such as counselling, should be spread out and available in different locations around the country. The resource centre should make use of existing skills and experience in the various parts of the organisation, not least the skills of adopted persons. They can contribute, for example, by holding experience exchanges and arranging meeting places, or by providing support in searching for origins. An advisory body should also be linked to the resource centre, which should include both researchers and internationally adopted persons.

#### **9.4.1 There has long been a demand for a "centre" where adoption-specific expertise is gathered**

As early as 2003, the Adoption Inquiry proposed a national research and knowledge centre. The inquiry's proposal meant that the upbringing and living conditions of adopted persons would be improved through a better knowledge base for professionals working with adoption-related issues. As we have previously described the proposal was not implemented. In its 2022 survey, the National Board of Health and Welfare also assessed that a structure is needed to collect, structure and disseminate existing knowledge about adopted persons and adoption in order to strengthen knowledge management within social services and health care.<sup>35</sup> Some of the support that the resource centre will offer, according to my proposal, is similar to what MFoF offers today. This will continue to be offered by the resource centre.

<sup>35</sup> SOU 2003:49.

<sup>36</sup> Written response from the National Board of Health and Welfare, received by the Adoption Commission on 14 February 2025; National Board of Health and Welfare (2022).

However, it is important that the new resource centre benefits from and learns from MFoF's previous work.

In the interviews and focus groups we conducted, there was a consensus that adoption-specific support should be gathered in one place, in a national competence or resource centre. There has been agreement that an important task for such a centre would be to compile and disseminate knowledge in the field of adoption to professionals who encounter adoptees in their work and, where necessary, to initiate new research and development in the field. There has also been agreement that a pure knowledge or competence centre is not sufficient, but that direct support is needed, primarily for people who have been adopted internationally. The direct support requested is counselling, meeting places and forums for exchanging experiences, support in searching for origins and DNA searches, and legal advice. The interview study published by Mattias Strand and Natte Hillerberg in 2024 also showed that many of their participants want a central knowledge centre where various aspects and needs relating to transnational adoption are available under one roof, including support and treatment, searching for origins and general legal advice, for example on issues such as name changes, dual citizenship and inheritance disputes.<sup>37</sup>

Bringing all support under one "roof" may increase the chances that who need support can find and receive it. It is important that it is easy to find, that it is perceived as having a "low threshold" for making contact, that support is offered in various forms, in different places and without excessively long waiting times. Today, there is a significant risk that those who are most in need of support will not receive any. There are also significantly more women than men who seek support, and many men are reluctant to seek support even if they need it. Many also testify that adopted persons and adoptive parents often wait too long to seek support. Many have had bad experiences of not receiving good support within the regular healthcare system. For others, it has taken a long time to find suitable support. Statistically, adopted persons have a higher risk of suicide than the rest of the population. This increases the importance of adopted persons having access to good support in a timely manner, and that the support is easily accessible. MFoF's experience is that for the vast majority, remote support works well. With good digital accessibility, access is equal for everyone throughout the country and also for

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<sup>37</sup> M. Strand and N. Hillerberg (2024).

Swedish adoptees who currently live abroad.<sup>38</sup> An informative and guiding web portal is an important part of gathering and disseminating knowledge and "lowering the thresholds" for receiving information and support. It gives internationally adopted persons a way to read up on adoption-related issues, the support offered by the state, and other tips and contacts. The web portal also provides the general public, relatives, and persons who encounter internationally adopted persons in their profession with access and knowledge. It is important that such a web portal becomes known to the general public, professionals and the target group itself.

Our proposal addresses most of the points raised by several organisations for adopted persons in a joint statement to the Adoption Commission. They are calling for a national knowledge centre that stimulates research and disseminates knowledge through, among other things, education and counselling, coordinates origin searches and DNA issues, and supports adoptees and their relatives after adoption. They propose that a resource centre for internationally adopted persons should also bring together nationally adopted persons, persons placed in foster care, children born through various methods of assisted reproduction with donated cells, and unaccompanied refugees. One alternative they propose is for the resource centre to collaborate and create synergies with corresponding centres for these issues.<sup>(39)</sup> It is possible to extend my proposal to cover more target groups.

#### **9.4.2    Similar centres are being established in other countries**

In the Netherlands, an expert centre for international adoptions was established in 2023: Expertisecentrum interlandelijke adoptie, abbreviated INEA. INEA describes its mission as being the central place where all internationally adopted persons can turn to for support with issues relating to international adoption, with a particular focus on those who are experiencing problems with their adoption. Adoptive parents and other family members, as well as birth parents, are also welcome to contact INEA.

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<sup>38</sup> Comments received from MFoF on draft text 2025-04-01.

<sup>39</sup> Presentation by adopted organisations in the Swedish Parliament on 23 May 2023; Letter to the Adoption Commission from Chileadoption.se, TAR, AEF, AKF, the SKAN network and AFO "Joint document to the Adoption Commission regarding the establishment of a knowledge centre for adoptees", received by the Adoption Commission on 16 September 2024.

Parents can contact INEA with certain questions. INEA collects and makes available research in the field of adoption and guides internationally adopted persons on where they can turn to search for their origins, conduct DNA searches, find their adoption records or obtain legal support. Since 2025, INEA has been offering direct support to families in the form of "video home training" as well as individual and group counselling. (41) INEA also works to build networks for adoptees and invites them to various types of events. (42)

There are proposals to establish a centre of expertise in Norway, in the report submitted by the Norwegian Directorate of Health in 2021. According to the proposal the centre of expertise will be responsible for ensuring that all adoptive families are offered the opportunity to meet with a psychologist with knowledge of adoption during the initial period after the adoption, as well as operating a telephone service staffed by healthcare professionals with experience of adoptive families and adoption-related issues and challenges.

#### **9.4.3 Competence centres are an established way of gathering knowledge and offering support**

Competence centres are now an established and relatively common way of gathering expertise in a particular area. Their main task is usually to gather and disseminate knowledge to professionals who encounter the target group in their work. However, there are also competence centres that provide direct support to the target group, such as the National Centre for Women's Safety (NCK).

We have mapped eight national centres of expertise in Sweden to see what lessons can be learned from them. (44) Some success factors that emerged from the study are that there should be a clear and defined mission, stable funding, the right expertise

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<sup>40</sup> <https://inea.nl/over-inea/>. Retrieved 2025-01-16.

<sup>41</sup> Email to the Adoption Commission from INEA on 27 February 2025.

<sup>42</sup> Meeting with INEA in Houten on 3 October 2023.

<sup>43</sup> Norwegian Institute of Public Health (2021), *Bedte føte vat OG ettet snat. Selection and follow-up of adoptive families: Requirements and recommendations*, p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> National Competence Centre for Elderly Care (NKA), National Competence Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (NASP), National Competence Centre for Relatives (NKA), National Centre for Women's Safety (NCK), National Centre against Honour-related Violence and Oppression (NCH), Barnafrið (BARNAF), Swedish Dementia Centre (SDC) and Västra Götaland Region Competence Centre on Violence in Close Relationships (VKV).

The centre should be located at an existing host organisation and should be credible to the target group and highly accessible.

Competence centres are often run by a region, authority or university as the host organisation, but there are also those that are run as independent foundations. The number of employees is often between 10 and 30 full-time equivalents. All of the competence centres included in our survey emphasise the importance of cross-functional teams with diverse backgrounds. To achieve credibility, it is important that the centre is responsive and has a recipient perspective. One way to ensure the relevance of the knowledge centre and obtain feedback is to use user participation or focus groups. Competence centres are usually funded through grants via a government agency's regulatory letter, but can also be funded through external funds for research and individual projects. However, applying for external funds requires additional resources and administration, which takes time away from the main task. Stable funding with a multi-year plan is considered important for a competence centre to be established and function in the long term. In addition, a competence centre's mission needs to be clear both internally and externally. Internally, employees need to understand their role and mandate. Externally, other actors need to understand the competence centre's mission and target group. Competence centres that offer direct support to individuals require more resources and more practical, emotional and legal expertise than competence centres that only target the profession.

#### **9.4.4 Adoption-specific support should be gathered in a national resource centre.**

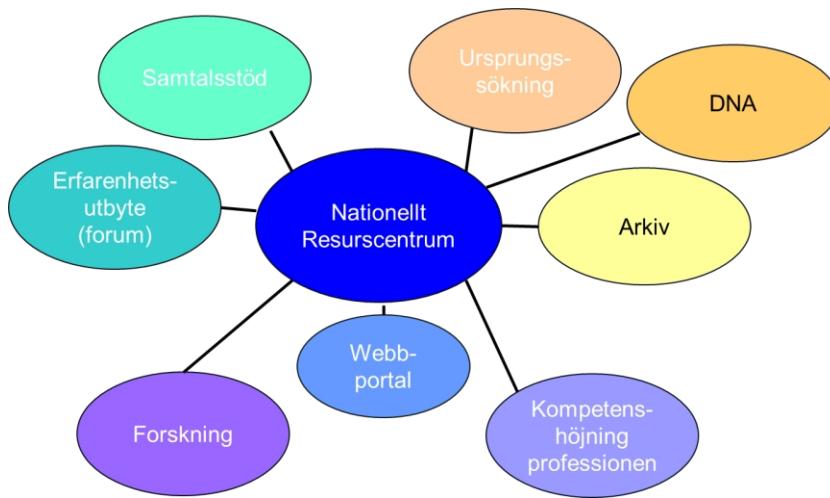
Based on the findings of our investigation, previous investigations and studies, and comparisons with other countries and other policy areas, my assessment is that a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues should be established. It should gather and coordinate the adoption-specific support offered by the state. The figure below shows the areas that such a centre should cover.

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<sup>45</sup> Governo. *Establishment of national competence centres in Sweden*, 30 January 2024.

Figure

Summary of the support that a resource centre should offer



**A resource centre provides the conditions for easily accessible and competent support**

It is important to ensure that those who need support are aware of this resource centre and the support it offers, and that the support is easily accessible. The resource centre will be a clear point of contact for adopted persons who need support and for professionals who encounter adopted persons in their work. Adoptive parents, other family members and relatives of adopted persons should also be able to receive some support.

Some important starting points have been that the support should be easily accessible, well organised and offered with a high level of broad expertise. My assessment is therefore that the resource centre should be nationally managed and coordinated, while certain parts, such as the helpline, should be spread out and available in different locations around the country. The resource centre should make use of existing expertise and experience in the various parts of the organisation, not least the expertise of adopted persons. They can contribute, for example, by facilitating exchanges of experience and arranging meeting places, acting as "on-call friends" or "cultural interpreters," or providing support in searching for origins. Another way to utilise the expertise and experience that exists is to establish an advisory body at the resource centre, which includes researchers

and people who are adopted or have other relevant experience and expertise. The expertise and experience of adopted persons can be utilised and they also have the opportunity to influence the activities. An advisory body gives researchers the opportunity to learn about the knowledge needs that exist and, based on this, can assist in assessing what can be met by compiling existing research and in which areas new studies are needed.

**A resource centre should bring together both knowledge-enhancing support and direct support for the target group.**

I believe that a resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues should offer both direct support to internationally adopted persons and knowledge-enhancing support to relatives, the general public and, not least, to professionals who encounter adopted persons in their work. Direct support for adopted persons should include developed counselling and support in searching for origins, but also an informative and guiding web portal and the possibility of general advice by telephone, for example on issues relating to archives, DNA and legal matters. A resource centre should also offer meeting places and forums for adoptees to exchange experiences. Competence-enhancing support for professionals who encounter adoptees in their work should be provided through knowledge dissemination on the web portal, telephone counselling and special competence-enhancing initiatives.

The starting point has been to, as far as possible, submit proposals based on and strengthening existing activities and structures within government control. The proposal is partly a further development of the support measures currently provided by MFoF, which offers both knowledge-enhancing support and direct support. An alternative to gathering support for internationally adopted persons in a resource centre with both knowledge-enhancing support for professionals and direct support for the target group is to rely more on the regular structures that exist within municipalities and regions. In that case, direct support for adopted persons would be provided within social services and existing health and medical care. The adoption-specific competence of various professionals would be enhanced by using existing structures for knowledge management in the state, where the National Board of Health and Welfare manages knowledge in both social services and health and medical care. This structure could be supplemented by a dedicated competence centre tasked with offering knowledge

increasing efforts for relevant professions, promoting research in the field, offering forums and exchanges of experience, and otherwise disseminating information and knowledge about adoption issues.

However, I believe that these alternatives would not be sufficient to meet existing needs, either in the short or long term. In the short term, there is a risk that many adoptees will not receive the support they need. In the long term, knowledge and expertise can certainly be built up in various areas, but this is a challenge because internationally adopted persons are a relatively small group. Unlike an organisation whose main target group is internationally adopted persons, it is difficult for staff in both social services and health care to gain sufficient experience and expertise to provide adequate support and assistance. Relying on regular activities would neither produce sufficiently good results nor be cost-effective. I believe that both a general and a targeted increase in competence within regular activities is important, but that it is not sufficient to meet the needs of adopted persons and to fulfil the requirements of the 1993 Hague Convention.

One objection to the state offering direct support to individuals is that it may be problematic to give this particular group preferential treatment. However, Sweden has a special responsibility for people who have been adopted internationally. According to the HCCH, states must do everything in their power to fulfil this obligation and meet the needs of both adopted persons and their families.<sup>46</sup> This is not currently the case.

One risk of concentrating support for adoptees in a resource centre is that regular healthcare and social services may shirk their responsibility by referring adoptees seeking care and support to a resource centre instead. However, the support should be complementary and should not replace the responsibility of municipalities and regions. Some adopted persons who turn to the resource centre may be referred to regular care services, where there should eventually be more professionals who have undergone skills development at the resource centre and increased their adoption-specific expertise. Other persons who have first turned to primary care may be referred to the resource centre if the healthcare staff assess that the problems are adoption-related.

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<sup>46</sup> HCCH (2008), p. 125.

Social services have a responsibility to provide support and assistance to adopted children and their families after an adoption, but no specific responsibility for adult adoptees. This is where the resource centre fills a gap. Social services also have no specific responsibility for providing support in searching for origins, but should, according to the MFoF's general advice, offer advice and support when an adopted person requests access to information about their adoption and information about where they can turn to find out more about their origins. It is reasonable for social services to then refer them to the resource centre.

One advantage of a state-funded national resource centre is that it ensures resources for adoption-specific support and that more equal support can be offered to internationally adopted persons.

## **9.5 The resource centre shall offer highly skilled and accessible counselling based on freedom of choice.**

**The investigator's assessment:** The counselling support currently provided by MFoF does not sufficiently meet the requirements for adoption-specific expertise, availability and freedom of choice that are in demand. Although many of those who have used the counselling service are satisfied, there are also those who are dissatisfied and those who, for various reasons, do not want to use the counselling service. This means that there is a risk that individuals in need of support will choose not to take advantage of the support offered.

**The investigator's proposal:** The national resource centre shall establish adoption-specific counselling support for internationally and nationally adopted persons, based on freedom of choice. The support shall be long-term and offer broad and high adoption-specific expertise with high availability. The support shall include individual counselling and counselling groups for adopted persons and adoptive parents. Unlike today, the support shall be available to adoptees even under the age of 15, following an individual assessment. The support shall be free of charge.

<sup>47</sup> MFoF (2022), *The Swedish Agency for Family and Parenting Support's general guidelines (HSLF-FS 2022:25) on the social services committee's handling of cases concerning international adoption.*

### 9.5.1 There is a great need for adoption-specific counselling

There is a great need for adoption-specific counselling among adopted persons. This is evident from the interviews and focus groups we have conducted, but also from the evaluations made by MFoF of the existing counselling services.<sup>48</sup> Many adopted persons share similar experiences and difficulties, such as feelings of loneliness, fear of being abandoned and difficulties in close relationships. Many have also experienced racism and racialisation in various forms. Other themes also recur in our interviews and focus groups. These include, for example, feelings of gratitude debt, exclusion and liminality, discrimination and sexual harassment.

Media reports of irregularities in international adoptions to Sweden have also raised questions about identity, origin and belonging that many adoptees have not previously been confronted with and which they need to process. Another growing need is support in connection with trips to their country of origin.

While adopted people share similar experiences and difficulties, they all have unique experiences and perceptions, depending on events both before and after the adoption. The need for counselling is therefore very individual. Adoption is also a lifelong process, and the need for support can therefore vary during different stages of life, both in terms of how much support is needed and what type of support is needed. Our interviews and focus groups show that support can be particularly important in connection with certain stages of life or specific events, such as during adolescence, when pregnant or a new parent, when relationships begin or end, when a parent dies, or when one becomes seriously ill or is at the end of life. Reuniting with one's original family can also be a complex process that can evoke different thoughts and feelings.

Reactions may occur long after a reunion. Adoptive parents may also be in need of support, as our focus groups show. This may involve receiving support in their parenting and being a good support to their child. There may also be a need for support for adoptive parents if irregularities come to light.

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<sup>48</sup> MFoF (2024), *Slrttappott Adoptsonsspecfskt ptofessionellt samtalsstöd tsll adoptetade och adoptsväldtat*, p. 8 ff.

## 9.5.2 Current counselling support through MFoF

### Counselling for adopted persons over the age of 15 and adoptive parents

Since 2020, MFoF has been offering professional counselling to adoptees aged 15 and over. From 2022, support will also be offered to adoptive parents. The support is aimed at both internationally and nationally adopted persons. MFoF has contracted Apoteksgårdens Kognitiva Center AB to provide the support. The counselling consists of individual psychotherapeutic support sessions and group sessions conducted by licensed psychotherapists and licensed psychologists. The support is a complement to regular healthcare and includes guidance, not treatment, sessions. This means that people with needs that are deemed to be more extensive than what the counselling support can offer are referred to regular health and medical care. The group sessions consist of six meetings based on different themes. The individual sessions have mostly been offered digitally, but it has also been possible to book physical meetings in a few locations. There has been no limit on the number of individual conversations other than that the individual is offered a maximum of one conversation per week. Available resources and the individual's needs have determined the extent of the conversation support. It is not possible to have individual conversations and participate in group conversations at the same time. The conversation support is free of charge.

From when the counselling service began on 1 September 2020 until 31 October 2024, a total of 792 adopted persons and 136 adoptive parents have received counselling. More women than men have used the counselling service. The statistics do not show how many children have received counselling support. A total of 18 individuals in the 15–22 age group have received support. Of the total of 173 individuals who sought support in 2024, 20 have been referred to other care. The average number of counselling sessions is 6.8 per individual. The average number of contacts for adopted women is 6.7 and for adopted men 7.1.<sup>(49)</sup> According to representatives of Apoteksgården, the fact that there is no maximum limit on the number of sessions has led to a queue for

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<sup>49</sup> MFoF. *Slrttappott Adoptsonsspecfskt ptofessonellt samtalsstöd tsll adoptetade och adoptsfötäldtat*. Government assignment S2021/08111 (partial). December 2024.

<sup>50</sup> MFoF. *Specialised professional counselling support for adoptees and adoptive parents*. Government assignment S2021/08111 (partial). December 2024; Meeting with Apoteksgården on 14 June 2024.

counselling support. In June 2024, the waiting time was reportedly 1–1 1/2 months, according to Apoteksgården.<sup>51</sup>

### Varying perceptions of MFoF's existing counselling support

There are different perceptions of the counselling support offered by MFoF through Apoteksgården. MFoF's evaluation of the support shows that those who have taken advantage of it are satisfied. The results of Apoteksgården's own web survey of all those who have used the support show a high level of satisfaction with the support, particularly with regard to the relationship with the therapist and the counselling methods. Many emphasised the importance of the therapist's adoption-specific expertise. Participants highlighted the support as important for their well-being and relationship management, as well as for understanding and processing the emotional challenges of adoption.

However, some participants wanted more structure and face-to-face meetings, and requested more flexibility in conversation times.

Representatives of adoptee associations and individual adoptees have written to the Adoption Commission to express their views on the counselling support offered by Apoteksgården. The letter states that several adoptees who have received counselling support consider the support to have been problematic, unprofessional and, in some cases, more harmful than healing. Several have felt that they needed to "educate" the therapists about adoption and racism, and sometimes also had to explain and convince them that racism exists. It is considered problematic that the company is owned and run by an adoptive parent and that MFoF, despite being aware of the criticism levelled at Apoteksgården, has chosen to continue to place its trust in them. Most participants also consider the evaluations of the counselling support to have been very inadequate. <sup>(53)</sup> In November 2023 Chileadoption.se conducted a survey of its members, which showed that there was considerable dissatisfaction among the 18 people who had taken part in the counselling support. <sup>(54)</sup> In Mattias Strand

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Apoteksgården 14 June 2024.

<sup>52</sup> MFoF, *Slrttappott Adoptionsspecfskt professionellt samtalsstöd tsll adopterade och adoptsv-fötäldrat*. Government assignment S2021/08111 (partial). December 2024, pp. 3, 8 and 13.

<sup>53</sup> Letter received by the Adoption Commission on 25 February 2024. Cooperation group Adopted persons' associations and individuals' mistrust and lack of confidence in the Swedish Authority for Family Law and Parental Support (MFoF). The letter is signed by, among others, representatives of AEF, AFO, chileadoption.se, TAR, AKF and SKAN, as well as individuals.

<sup>54</sup> Chileadoption.se "Report from a survey of members of Chileadoption.se". Received by the Adoption Commission on 15 January 2024.

and Natte Hillerberg's interview study on the experiences and wishes of transnationally adopted persons regarding care and support in 2024, several participants in the study emphasised that the knowledge that adoption organisations and adoptive parents are involved in support efforts affects their confidence in the support.<sup>55</sup>

Our interviews and focus groups also revealed mixed opinions about the counselling service. Those who were positive felt that the counselling service worked well, that they were given good "tools" and help with, for example, processing feelings of abandonment. They also felt that they were given the time and opportunities for support that they needed. Others expressed dissatisfaction with the counselling support. They felt that there was a lack of competence or understanding of the problems experienced by adoptees. Criticism has also focused on a lack of availability – that people have had to wait too long, been offered too few sessions, and that counselling support is only offered digitally or physically in a few locations in Sweden. A recurring objection has also been that guidance counselling is not always sufficient, and that some people need to be offered therapy and treatment counselling. Some have also expressed the criticism described above that Apoteksgården has too strong a connection to adoptive parents and that this may be a reason not to turn to them for support.

Representatives of Apoteksgården confirm in an interview that they initially received a lot of criticism from some adoptees because someone who was an adoptive parent themselves should not provide counselling support to adoptees. However, according to Apoteksgården, the criticism comes from people who have not taken part in the counselling support, but have only had initial contact about the counselling itself.

Overall, our impression is that those who have taken part in the counselling support offered by Apoteksgården in many cases appreciate the support. However, other people choose not to use the counselling service because they lack confidence in Apoteksgården. This is unfortunate, as it may mean that individuals who are in need of support choose not to take advantage of the support offered.

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<sup>55</sup> M. Strand and N. Hillerberg (2024).

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Apoteksgården on 14 June 2024.

### **9.5.3 Future counselling services should be long-term, offer a high level of expertise and availability, and be based on freedom of choice**

Future counselling services should offer a higher and broader level of expertise than today, be more accessible and give those who use the services the opportunity to choose from a wider range of providers. The services should be long-term and offer continuity.

#### **Counselling support in Denmark gives target groups the opportunity to choose from several PAS counsellors located in different parts of the country.**

In our interviews with adopted persons and licensed psychotherapists with experience of offering counselling support to adopted persons, several have pointed to the PAS support (counselling support) offered by the Appeals Board in Denmark. The principle behind the Danish support is that it should be qualified, flexible and offer freedom of choice in different parts of the country.

The PAS support offered by the National Social Appeals Board was established in 2007. Today, the support includes counselling for individuals over the age of 18 and discussion groups for adults and children under the age of 18. They also offer support to adoptive parents and professionals. The support is offered to both nationally and internationally adopted persons. It does not replace the regions' responsibility for treatment care, but is an adoption-specific complement. For counselling support for adult adoptees, a limit of 8 sessions per individual was initially set, but exceptions have been and are being made, and there are individuals who have received up to 20 sessions or more.

The counselling service is provided by approximately 25 PAS counsellors located in different parts of the country. PAS counsellors are psychotherapists or psychologists with experience of children's developmental needs and the specific needs of adopted children (e.g. in terms of attachment, trauma, etc.). Of the 25 counsellors currently under contract, five are themselves adopted and five are adoptive parents. PAS counsellors receive SEK 1,000 in compensation per counselling session through the Ankestyrelsen (Swedish Social Insurance Agency) and the individual pays SEK 100.

### Target groups for future counselling support

Adoption-specific counselling support shall be offered to internationally and nationally adopted persons.

Individual counselling support shall be offered to adopted persons. Unlike today, counselling support should also be available to adopted persons under the age of 15. The resource centre may assess in each individual case what support is appropriate to offer based on the child's maturity. The child's own opinions and wishes are an important starting point in the assessment. The support shall comprise a maximum of 12 counselling sessions per individual during a continuous period. More sessions may be offered after special consideration. As the support is to be lifelong, the individual shall be able to return for new sessions. In a new phase of life or in connection with a specific event, new issues and needs for support may arise. In addition to individual counselling, group counselling for adults and children should also be offered.

As is currently the case, the support should also include support for adoptive parents.

There have also been requests for counselling support for children of adopted persons. However, the assessment is that it is important that resources are primarily directed towards adoptees and adoptive parents, as they have the greatest need for support. The support needs of adoptees' children can also be addressed through exchanges of experience and forums offered by the resource centre.

### Future counselling services should offer broader and deeper adoption-specific expertise and greater availability

*Btedate and djärpate adoptsonsspecfsk expertise*

According to our interviews and focus groups, there is a great need for counselling support. Counselling support must be able to offer adoption-specific expertise in several different areas and issues, such as attachment, trauma, identity and belonging, exclusion and inter-group relations, racism and racialisation. It is difficult for a single provider to meet all needs, as demonstrated by the counselling currently offered by MFoF and Apoteksgården. The solution, as in Denmark, is to allow several providers with different adoption-specific expertise and experience to offer support. In this way

, counselling services as a whole can offer both broader and deeper adoption-specific expertise.

When we talk about competence here, we mean the competence to address the various issues and challenges that individuals may have, such as attachment, trauma and racism. It does not refer to the training that individual providers or those offering counselling support should have. In Denmark, PAS counsellors are licensed psychotherapists and psychologists. The requirement for licensed personnel should also apply to the counselling support proposed here. In order to guarantee qualified counselling support, a requirement for the provider should be that those who conduct the counselling sessions have a licence issued by the National Board of Health and Welfare in a healthcare profession. This licence guarantees that the person offering counselling has adequate training and the ability to assess when counselling is not sufficient and to refer the person to more qualified care. Licensed healthcare professionals have personal responsibility for how they perform their work. The basis of their professional responsibility is to work on the basis of science and proven experience. Professional responsibility also means that healthcare personnel must report care injuries and risks of care injuries to the care provider. Our interviews have also revealed different views on the importance of the providers and licensed personnel offering the support having experience of being adopted themselves. Some believe it is important, while others instead, they see an advantage in talking to someone who does not have such experience. An important task for the resource centre will therefore be to develop good requirements with relevant competence and experience requirements for the providers who are to offer the counselling service. Representatives of the target group should be involved in this process.

As in Denmark, counselling should be an adoption-specific complement to the regular care provided by the health and medical services. I am aware that there is a demand for counselling that also includes trauma therapy and in-depth psychotherapy. However, the regions have overall responsibility for health and medical care and should work to promote good health among the population. In addition, the municipalities are responsible for certain health and medical care. There are risks associated with the state taking over part of the responsibility for the health and medical care of adopted persons. This is partly because it could lead to regions and municipalities relinquishing their responsibility and instead referring adopted persons to the resource centre, and partly because a state-

resource centre is not included in the knowledge development and exchange of experience that takes place within regular health and medical care. In the long run, this can lead to poorer care for adopted persons. Another objection is that it may conflict with the Health and Medical Services Act (2017:30) and the ethical platform for ethical priorities, which states that those with the greatest needs should be given the highest priority in healthcare.

### *High availability*

Future counselling services must also be more accessible than they are today, so that more people can benefit from them. Accessibility is an important principle in the Danish model and can be achieved in various ways. One way is through geographical accessibility, i.e. by making the services physically available in several locations around the country. This is achieved by offering counselling through several providers in different parts of the country. Accessibility can also be achieved through digital support, which is also offered today through Apoteksgården. Another way to increase accessibility is for more providers to offer counselling, thereby reducing the risk of queues forming when more people request support. The requirement for accessibility will also be an important issue for the resource centre to address.

### *Long-term nature and continuity*

Another important aspect of future counselling support is that it should be made permanent in order to provide greater continuity for both those who use the support and the providers who offer it. The counselling support that has been offered through MFoF since 2020 is based on a mandate in the authority's letter of regulation, for which the government has granted special funds. MFoF has had to take this into account in both in budgeting and procurement, which leads to a short-term perspective. Offering adoption-specific counselling should therefore be a permanent task in the instructions for the authority that becomes the host authority for the resource centre.

### **9.5.4 Counselling support should be based on freedom of choice**

The current counselling support provided by MFoF is offered through a contracted provider, which in turn offers several therapists from which the target group can choose. Although many who have used the support are satisfied, there have also been comments that the support is not sufficiently qualified and accessible. Queues and waiting times have also been created at the provider when demand for support has increased. This shows the vulnerability of having only one provider.

The approximately 25 PAS advisors who are part of the Danish counselling service are not procured by the Appeals Board, but are selected through a recruitment process. The authority has been granted an exemption from the procurement rules in order to be able to provide PAS support that is qualified, flexible and offers freedom of choice in different parts of the country. Advisors who are offered a place in the PAS programme sign a contract with the Appeals Board for a specific period and are paid for the hours they work as advisors. The contract can be extended.

Important parameters for selecting providers in a future counselling support programme are the providers' adoption-specific expertise and their geographical location in the country. The providers must collectively (not individually) be able to offer the various adoption-specific skills that are needed and also offer support in different parts of the country. Through its web portal, the resource centre shall provide information about which providers and licensed personnel are included, where they are located and what skills and experience they have, so that individuals can choose what suits them best.

Another aspect that may be important in terms of how best to achieve freedom of choice is the opportunity to bring together providers and authorised personnel who offer counselling services for the exchange of experiences and joint learning. This is an important part of the Danish model, where a coordinator at the National Social Appeals Board regularly brings together PAS advisors for guidance, training and knowledge exchange. In this way, the group has developed a common methodology and knowledge base that is owned by the PAS programme at the National Social Appeals Board. A prerequisite for this is that the number of providers is not too large.

### **Freedom of choice can be achieved in two different ways**

To clarify the conditions for offering counselling support, we have been in contact with the Swedish Procurement Authority and a procurement expert at the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR).

The conclusion based on these contacts is that, unlike in Denmark, it is not possible to avoid advertising and competition in order to establish a helpline with several external providers. Another conclusion is that there are no obstacles to offering freedom of choice through multiple providers. The solution chosen by MFoF, with the procurement of a single provider, is therefore not the only option. On the contrary, there are several ways to achieve freedom of choice. It will be an important task for the resource centre to test and select the appropriate solution to best achieve a future helpline that meets the requirements for competence, availability and freedom of choice.

Below, we describe the two models that can be used to achieve freedom of choice, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of both models.

*The resource centre has negotiated the call support and chosen the service provider that has demonstrated the best and most in-depth expertise and geographical coverage.*

This model is based on the Public Procurement Act (2016:1145) and involves a framework agreement procurement process in which the resource centre selects a number of suppliers that meet the selection criteria and enters into framework agreements with them. By using the distribution key "the individual chooses the supplier" in the procurement, the individual is given the opportunity to choose freely within the framework agreement. The resource centre can choose the contract length within the framework, and it is possible to terminate both the framework agreement and individual contracts in relation to a supplier who significantly violates the terms and conditions.

The advantages of this solution are that the resource centre can select a suitable number of suppliers based on procurement requirements and criteria, who together can offer the expertise and availability that is required. One requirement is that suppliers and those offering counselling services must be licensed to practise a healthcare profession. There must be no risk of untrustworthy suppliers and unlicensed personnel offering counselling services. The framework agreement can be structured in such a way (through allocation keys when an individual contract within the framework agreement

(on demand) that individuals can choose freely among the providers included in the framework agreement. With a suitable number of providers, the resource centre can also coordinate the people who offer the counselling support and develop a common methodology and knowledge base, thereby developing the support based on the group's needs according to the Danish model.

The disadvantage of this model is that it places high demands on the resource centre to establish good selection and award criteria in order to achieve the desired breadth of expertise and availability.

There may be a risk that the resource centre will "miss out" on good providers by limiting the number of providers within the framework agreement. There is also some uncertainty as to how selection and allocation criteria can be used to achieve geographical availability in different parts of the country.

*Those who have used the support have chosen from among the suppliers that meet the criteria and that offer telephone support.*

This model is based on the Freedom of Choice Act (2008:962) (LOV). LOV is an alternative to procurement under LOU. LOV allows private providers to establish themselves freely after applying and being approved, and means that individuals who use the support can choose from among the providers included in the conversation support system. Based on LOV, the Resource Centre sets requirements for providers and what should be offered within the counselling support. All providers who meet the requirements may participate and offer counselling support.

The advantage of this model is that it is based entirely on the principle of freedom of choice, where individuals can choose freely among the providers that meet the requirements. The resource centre does not make any selection; all providers that meet the requirements are allowed to join the system. This can open up opportunities for more providers with different adoption-specific expertise and possibly also support in more parts of the country.

The disadvantage is that there is a risk that it will be more difficult for the resource centre to quality assure the providers that are included and offer support. As described above, it is essential that those offering support are accredited. Apart from testing against the requirements in the tender documentation and the possibility of exclusion, the resource centre cannot select or reject providers. If many providers want to offer support, it will also be more difficult for the resource centre to coordinate.

organise suppliers to develop methods within the framework of conversation support. According to LOV, there is an obligation to provide information about all suppliers with whom the authority has entered into agreements. According to Chapter 9, Section 1 of LOV, the information must be objective, i.e. competition-neutral and not favour any particular supplier or suppliers. This would mean that the resource centre would not be able to select and gather the providers and authorised personnel who offer the support and are most in demand in order to offer guidance and knowledge exchange and thus develop the support based on the group's needs. The resource centre also needs to offer a non-selection option, which may, however, be procured. There is also some uncertainty as to whether counselling support can be covered by LOV.

## **9.6 The national resource centre shall offer forums and meeting places for adopted persons and their families**

**The investigator's assessment:** There is a great need for various forums and meeting places for adopted persons and their families. Meeting other people who share the same experiences can strengthen the sense of belonging and context and prevent mental ill health. The meeting places and forums for adopted persons that exist today are not sufficient.

**The investigator's proposal:** The national resource centre should offer various forms of physical and digital forums and meeting places for adoptees and their families. This could involve, for example, organising lectures and meetings based on different themes and offering meeting places for social interaction. It is important that the resource centre pays particular attention to the needs and wishes of children and young people in terms of sharing experiences and socialising.

### **9.6.1 There is a great need for meeting places for adopted persons and their families.**

Our interviews show that there is a great need for various forums where adopted people and their families can meet and share experiences with others. Meeting other people who share the experience of being adopted can strengthen the feeling of belonging and connection and prevent mental ill health. Although both AC and several organisations for adoptees offer various types of lectures and social meeting places, there is a need for forums that do not require membership in an organisation. The proposal is therefore that the resource centre should offer various forms of easily accessible physical and digital forums and meeting places for adoptees and their families.

The national resource centre should offer a positive and safe place where adopted persons can strengthen their identity and be given space to feel pride in their origins in community with others. The resource centre can organise lectures and meetings based on different themes where participants can share their own experiences and hear about others'. Such meetings can be organised in different ways, for example based on age, country of origin or continent. The resource centre can organise language cafés or meeting places for adopted persons who want to learn a particular language, as well as provide information about language courses.

The resource centre can also offer meeting places for social cohesion where people can socialise, for example through activities that have nothing to do with adoption. As described above, it is important that there are forums for meeting that are positive, constructive and forward-looking. It is important that the resource centre pays particular attention to the needs and wishes of children and young people in terms of sharing experiences and socialising.

Culture is of great importance to people's health and well-being, and therefore the resource centre should also collect adoption-related culture in areas such as music, dance, creative arts, theatre, writing, film and photography.

The resource centre can also fulfil an important function by coordinating and disseminating information about events and meeting places organised by other actors.

### 9.6.2 Physical and digital meeting places

In our interviews and focus groups, both younger and older adoptees have requested physical meeting places. One young interviewee believes that the most important support for adopted young people would be to feel a sense of community, to be able to see themselves reflected in other adoptees and to learn from the experiences of others. This person wishes there was a place where they could go to meet other adopted children and young people, hang out and get to know each other, as well as learn about adoption, the adoption process and how to search for their roots. There could be a library with books containing facts and autobiographies, a play and craft room, a conversation room and a relaxation room. The person suggests that this could be brought together in an "Adoptees' House". But it could also be at youth centres or within an organisation such as Bris. The staff who meet the young people should themselves be adopted and not too far apart in age. They could be young adults without special training or trained staff, such as counsellors. <sup>Those</sup> offering support should not only be adopted themselves, but also knowledgeable, committed, active and proactive. It should be possible to ask questions about adoption and get answers, as well as have access to in-depth support. Organisations for adopted people have put forward a joint proposal stating that there is a need for a library for literature, research and artistic material related to adoption issues.

Although there is a strong desire for physical meeting places, there is also a need for digital meeting places. This is partly because some people prefer digital meetings, and partly for practical reasons of accessibility.

### 9.6.3 Volunteer work as an "adopted friend"

There are opportunities for the resource centre to engage unpaid volunteers in its activities (see section 9.7.6). In Belgium, the A-buddy project for and with adoptees was launched in 2018 and established and supported by the Adoption Support Centre organisation. The project is being implemented with support from Flanders Care and NetWerk Onlinehulp Vlaanderen, both of which are funded by the Flemish authorities.

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<sup>57</sup> Chileadoption.se, TAR, AEF, AKF, the SKAN network and AFO. *Joint document to the Adoption Commission regarding the establishment of a resource centre for adoptees*. Submitted to the Adoption Commission on 16 September 2024.

A-buddy can be described as a buddy programme where adoptees can chat or arrange meetings with someone who is also adopted. The basic idea is that it can be different to receive support and exchange experiences with someone who is also adopted, rather than with a counsellor. The staff consists of volunteers and the work is done on a voluntary basis, with the exception of reimbursement for expenses and volunteer insurance.

There have previously been activities in Sweden where adopted persons have similarly acted as "on-call friends" for other adopted persons. Several adopted persons in our interviews have been positive about this. Another idea that has been put forward is to use mentoring, where an older adopted person can act as a mentor to a younger one. Helping others can be a way of healing oneself.

## 9.7 The national resource centre shall assist adopted persons in searching for their origins

**The investigator's assessment:** The support in searching for origins that adopted persons are currently offered by various actors is not sufficient to meet existing needs and to comply with the provisions of international and Swedish law concerning adopted persons' right to their origins and identity. The MFoF has continuously developed its support for origin searches based on the resources and other conditions available, but there is still a need for further development. The support needs to be more concrete and helpful. Those who provide support need to draw on the experiences of more actors in order to be able to provide more competent and developed support.

**The investigator's proposal:** The Resource Centre for Adopted Persons and Adoption Issues is tasked with being a central point of contact for internationally adopted persons who wish to search for their origins. The Resource Centre should develop a general structure for the search and specific "packages" for how to search for one's origins in different countries of origin.

<sup>58</sup> Governo. *Analysis of adoption-specific support. Assignment for the Adoption Commission*. 13 February 2025, p. 13.

Swedish authorities abroad shall be obliged to assist the national resource centre in searches for origins. For example, authorities abroad should provide the national resource centre with up-to-date information on the possibilities for adoptees to search for their origins under the legislation of the country, as well as which authorities and organisations are responsible for which parts of the process and how they can assist.

It is important that the resource centre broadens its expertise and draws on the knowledge and experience of origin searches available at the MFoF, adoption organisations, adoptee associations and individuals. This expertise can be utilised through temporary employment or assignments. The resource centre should also enable civil society to contribute to origin searches.

### **9.7.1 Adoptees need to be offered better support in searching for their origins than is currently available.**

#### **Current support through MFoF**

Since 2020, MFoF has been tasked with offering adopted persons individual support in searching for their origins. Before MFoF was given this task in 2020, there was no state support for searching for origins in Sweden.

The support has been developed continuously during the period it has been offered, based on the resources and time available. MFoF's report to the government shows that the support provided by MFoF includes many important elements. For example, MFoF can help to structure the search, provide support in understanding adoption documents, search for information that may be valuable for continuing the search, or obtain information about different search and contact channels in the country of origin. According to the MFoF, the support can also be practical, such as helping to formulate a text to send to an authority or organisation in the country of origin, assessing what information or documents may be appropriate to attach to an application, or providing support in connection with contact with authorities in other countries. To a certain extent, financial support is offered, through the possibility of having adoption documents translated from the language of the country of origin into Swedish and the possibility of telephone

Representatives of MFoF believe that they have been able to provide several adoptees with

people with new and better information about their background and adoption, and that they have helped with reunions. The MFoF also perceives that adoptees are satisfied that it is a government agency that is helping, as many distrust adoption organisations.<sup>60</sup> In its interim and final reports MFoF has stated that the support meets some of the needs that adoptees may have in relation to searching for their origins, but has also highlighted areas where the support needs to be further developed. Among other things, according to the MFoF, there is a need for various types of legal assistance, for example to gain access to documents or to interpret legislation in the country of origin, as well as increased opportunities for translation and interpreting assistance after an adopted person has found their family of origin. <sup>(61)</sup>

The MFoF has emphasised that it is important for the individual to be motivated and involved in their search for their origins and to be given the opportunity to control the process themselves. Furthermore, it is not possible in all countries for a third party to carry out the search; it must be done by the adoptee themselves <sup>(62)</sup>

The adopted persons who participated in our interviews and focus groups want more support in searching for their origins than what MFoF actually offers. Some express disappointment with the support provided by MFoF. For example, MFoF has only provided tips on who to contact, but has not helped with booking or participating in meetings with authorities in the country of origin. It has also emerged that some internationally adopted persons do not want to turn to MFoF because they lack confidence in the authority. They do not perceive the authority as "being on the side of the adoptees". Some who request support in searching for their origins are also unaware that MFoF has a mandate to assist in this.

A collaborative group for adoptee associations and individuals has submitted a letter stating that the MFoF does not offer the support that it claims to provide on its website. They describe

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<sup>59</sup> MFoF (2022), *Project with special support for internationally adopted persons seeking their origins*; MFoF (2024), *Slrtappott. Support for internationally adopted children seeking parental rights*. Government assignment S2021/08111 (partial), January 2024.

<sup>60</sup> Meeting with MFoF on 10 February 2022.

<sup>61</sup> MFoF (2022), *Project with special support for nationally adopted children seeking parental rights*; MFoF (2024), *Slrtappott. Support for internationally adopted children's right to search*. Government assignment S2021/08111 (partial) January 2024.

<sup>62</sup> MFoF. Comments on Chapter 9. Received 2025-04-01.

that most adoptees report being treated with indifference, receiving curt responses and only being contacted by email and telephone, and that the process is extremely slow and bureaucratic. Some adoptees also report having been treated poorly. <sup>(63)</sup>The collaboration group also points out that MFoF has been inflexible and has not sought alternative solutions, has not been helpful throughout the application process, and has not assisted in calling embassies in Sweden or in the countries of origin. The documentation they attach to their letter, which includes examples of email conversations between an adoptee and the investigator at MFoF, confirms the problem. The collaboration group further describes how MFoF has offered interpreting assistance via translation apps, which in some cases has provided misleading and incorrect information and led to devastating consequences for the adoptee in their search for their origins.

The MFoF states that in recent years there have been no delays in initiating origin searches and that responses to questions have been handled promptly. If a person has wanted to change their contact person, this has been possible, but no such requests have been received. The MFoF emphasises that the search process varies in length for different countries, which they inform individuals about. In the case of Colombia, it can take more than two years to receive a response to an application to the central authority ICBF. In the case of India, it is not certain that a response or feedback will be received from the authorities, so it may be necessary to apply via an orphanage. MFoF also points out that the requirements vary depending on the country in which an individual is searching for their origins. In some countries, such as South Korea and Colombia, the authorities want the adoptee themselves to apply for support. In other countries, it is a requirement that the application comes from the central authority. When authorities from countries of origin have wanted to book meetings or calls with individuals, the person has sometimes contacted MFoF, and the authority has then provided interpreting support and offered to participate in the meeting to provide support and take notes. If a person has wanted to conduct the meeting on their own, MFoF has offered to follow up after the conversation. MFoF also points out that the resources allocated to the authority for the task of providing support in origin searches have been a limiting factor in the scope of practical support. <sup>(64)</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Letter received by the Adoption Commission on 25 February 2024. Collaboration group Adopted associations and individuals' distrust and lack of confidence in the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support (, MFoF).

<sup>64</sup> MFoF. Comments on Chapter 9. Received on 1 April 2025.

## Current support through adoption organisations

Authorised adoption organisations also offer birth search services. AC organises workshops where adoptees have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on issues related to birth search. AC also offers individual support for birth search by providing copies of adoption documents and offering preparatory advice and support prior to a return trip. However, in order to start the search for one's roots, one must be a member of AC, and the possibility of support throughout the process is limited to seven countries. In addition to the cost of membership, there may be additional costs associated with searching for one's roots. Since the mid-1980s, AC has organised group return trips for adoptees and adoptive families who want to search for their origins or get to know their country of origin. To date, AC has organised trips to South Korea, Chile, Colombia and India. Before the return trips, AC organises two meetings that those who wish to travel must attend. AC has sometimes held discussions prior to meetings with biological families and ensured that they receive support before the first meeting.<sup>66</sup> In some cases, BFA has also helped people who were adopted through them to establish contact with the relevant authorities, children's homes and organisations in their country of origin in connection with their return trip.<sup>67</sup> The adoption organisation FFIA has a foundation from which adoptees can apply for a grant for return trips. A grant of up to a maximum of half the base amount can be awarded, and persons adopted through FFIA are given priority.

In our interviews with people who have been adopted internationally, different views emerge, particularly regarding AC's support in searching for one's origins. Several adoptees are critical of AC requiring membership in order to receive help in searching for one's origins and of AC charging a fee for a limited service. Several have also experienced resistance from AC when they have wanted to search for their roots. Others feel that they have received good help from AC, for example in connection with reuniting with their birth family and how to prepare for contact and meetings with their birth family.

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<sup>65</sup> n South Korea, Colombia, South Africa, Serbia, Montenegro, the Philippines and Vietnam.

<sup>66</sup> Meeting with AC 23 October 2023; MFoF (2022), *Project with special support for internationally adopted persons seeking their roots*. p. 26.

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.bfa.se/adopterad/>. Retrieved 21 October 2024.

<sup>68</sup> See also L. Wool-Rim Sjöblom (2016), *Palsmpest*.

## Support through adopted organisations

Several organisations and networks for adoptees have gathered information on how adoptees can search for their origins on their websites, and several organisations assist individuals with advice and support in their search for their origins. Among other things, SKAN has compiled an information booklet entitled "Searching for your roots in South Korea", which contains information about searching for your origins in South Korea. SKAN has also compiled a list of orphanages in South Korea. AFO has established a network of contacts that can help with searches for origins in other countries. Chileadoption.se collaborates with the Chilean non-profit organisation Hijos y Madres del Silencio, which works to reunite adoptees with their birth families. Many have found this support valuable, but some point out that this is a responsibility that should lie with the state. Adoptees are calling for professional support from a state-run and neutral actor. At the same time, many emphasise the importance of those who help with origin searches having cultural understanding, or connecting with people who do. Several adoptees say that they have received valuable help in their country of origin from other people, including other adoptees, who have offered support in their search for their origins.

### **9.7.2 The Resource Centre shall offer support in searching for origins**

According to my proposal, the Resource Centre for Adopted Persons and Adoption Issues should be tasked with serving as a central point of contact for internationally adopted persons who wish to search for their origins. The Resource Centre should establish a general structure for the search, providing guidance on which archives to consult to find adoption documents, assistance with translation and understanding the content of the adoption documents, and a checklist or guide on how to proceed with the search for one's origins based on where one is in the search process. In addition, the resource centre should develop specific "packages" for how to search for one's origins in different countries of origin. These could include tips on effective approaches from others who have searched for their origins in the same country and tips on contacts in the United Kingdom and the country of origin who can help one move forward in the search. It could also include tips on interpreters, guidance on how to access adoption documents in the specific country, and tips on

actors in the country of origin who can provide practical assistance in tracing origins or who have cultural expertise regarding the country in question.

The resource centre should also assist in contacting the central authority in the country of origin to obtain documentation that is available there. MFoF has partially compiled such information in its internal knowledge bank on the various countries. Sometimes they have been able to share this type of information with adoptees in individual conversations. <sup>(69)</sup> This information should be used as a basis for

build up specific "packages" for origin searches in different countries, which should be available to those who wish to search for their origins.

The need for psychosocial support that may arise in connection with origin searches, return trips and reunification is offered through the resource centre's counselling support.

However there is a limit to what an authority can do when searching for origins. The MFoF emphasises that they cannot use the same channels of contact as, for example, organisations for adoptees, and that contacts must go through the central authority or other authorities in the other country.

### **Children should also be offered support in tracing their origins after an individual assessment**

The support for origin searches currently offered by the MFoF only covers adopted persons over the age of 18. The AC also recommends that origin searches should not be initiated before the adopted person has reached the age of 18. According to AC, the reason for this is that far from all adoptees will be in a position to search for and find their birth family, for example because there is insufficient background information to start a search or because the country of origin's confidentiality legislation prevents a search. It may also be that the birth family does not want contact. There must be a well-developed support system in place to deal with the situations and feelings that the adoptee may encounter, which can be both unexpected and shocking. <sup>(71)</sup> I have therefore considered that support for origin searches, as is currently the case, should only be offered to adoptees over the age of 18. According to Chapter 26, Section 8 of the Public

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<sup>69</sup> MFoF. Comments on Chapter 9. Received 2025-04-01.

<sup>70</sup> Meeting with MFoF on 24 February 2025.

<sup>71</sup> AC's comments on Chapter 9 Adoption-specific support. Received on 2 April 2025.

The Personal Data Act (2009:400) gives the adopted child the right to obtain information about circumstances that are important for him or her to know who his or her biological parents are. However, an adopted child may also have access to his or her adoption documents after consideration by the social services committee.<sup>72</sup> Article 22 of the 2008 Council of Europe Convention states, among other things, that the adopted child has the right to obtain information about his or her origins from the competent authorities and that appropriate guidance should be given to adopted children who have not reached the age of majority. I therefore consider that children should also be offered support from the resource centre when searching for their origins. The resource centre may assess in each individual case what support is appropriate to offer based on the child's maturity. The child's own opinions and wishes are an important starting point in this assessment. The need for psychosocial support that may arise in connection with tracing one's origins is offered through the resource centre's counselling support.

### **9.7.3 Considerations regarding broadening of expertise and the demarcation between actors**

We have considered various ways of broadening our expertise and utilising the expertise of different actors in order to provide effective support in the search for origins. One guiding principle has been that the support should be coordinated by a government agency so that there is a clear path for adoptees who want to search for their origins, but that it is not enough for only a few employees at a Swedish authority to have this task. We have sought solutions to enable both individuals and organisations to contribute their expertise and experience and receive compensation for this. An individual who, for example, is themselves adopted, has personal experience of searching for their origins, has good knowledge of their country of origin and has helped others to search for their roots should be able to be employed on a project basis to assist the resource centre in building up country-specific support for searching for origins. An individual or association should also be able to contribute their expertise through a special assignment. This could involve, for example, actors with cultural expertise about a specific country acting as "cultural interpreters" prior to an adopted person's return. Organisations that already have

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<sup>72</sup> MFoF (2022), *Internationell adoptson. Handbook for social services*, p. 117.

Experience of supporting adopted persons in searching for their origins should also be eligible for state subsidies.

#### **9.7.4 Swedish authorities abroad shall assist in searches for origins**

As stated in Chapter 8, I propose that Swedish authorities abroad should be obliged to assist MFoF with investigations in cases concerning permits for international adoption. I believe that foreign authorities also have an important role to play in cases concerning origin searches. Although Swedish foreign authorities have not had any specific responsibility in international adoption activities, they have in practice played a major role, both at an overall diplomatic level and in individual cases. This is particularly true in countries from which Sweden has adopted many children. It is therefore reasonable that Swedish authorities abroad should now also take responsibility for assisting adopted persons who are searching for their origins. By way of comparison, Denmark, following a decision by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing (Social- og Boligministerium), has implemented a pilot project with a specially appointed representative at the Danish embassy in Santiago de Chile. The project, which started in August 2022 and ended in July 2024, aimed to support Danish adoptees in searching for their origins. No specific evaluation of the project has been carried out, but it was monitored by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing. According to the Danish Embassy in Santiago, eight people requested assistance during the project period. As a result of the project, the embassy produced a guide for adoptees from Chile who wish to search for their adoption documents and their original family in Chile. According to MFoF Swedish embassies in various countries have also assisted MFoF with information in several cases and

In some cases, this has meant that the family of origin has been found.<sup>73</sup> I believe that the new provision in Regulation (2014:115) with instructions for foreign representation that I propose should also include an obligation for foreign authorities to assist the resource centre in tracing origins. The assignment should include providing the national resource centre with up-to-date information on the possibilities for adoptees to trace their

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<sup>73</sup> Email to the Adoption Commission from the National Board of Appeal on 26 February 2025.

<sup>74</sup> MFoF. Comments on Chapter 9. Received on 1 April 2025.

origin under the legislation of the country and which authorities and organisations are responsible for which parts of the process and how they can assist. The Swedish authorities abroad can also, in the same way that they assist Swedish social welfare committees in investigating cases concerning the determination of paternity, assist in sampling for DNA testing.

### **9.7.5 The Resource Centre needs to involve the expertise available in civil society in its work on origin searches**

In developing the origin search activities, it is important that the national resource centre makes use of the expertise and experience available in associations for adoptees, adoption organisations and individuals. At the same time, it is important to ensure the quality of the support offered by civil society and individuals.

We have met several adopted people who now volunteer their time to assist other adopted people with advice and practical help. There are also other actors within civil society<sup>(75)</sup> who can contribute important knowledge and experience, such as the Red Cross's work to trace missing relatives (Restoring Family Links). The Red Cross has informed the Adoption Commission that it can accept requests from adoptees for help with tracing on a case-by-case basis. The basic conditions are that the separation was caused by war, conflict or natural disasters, that the case falls within the scope of the relevant national association's criteria for tracing, and that certain minimum information about the person being traced is available, such as name, last known address and approximate age. If this information is available, the Red Cross can assess whether it can proceed with the case and whether there is added value in the Red Cross becoming involved. The Red Cross can also assist by contacting other national Red Cross societies and asking whether they in turn can refer to non-profit organisations.

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<sup>75</sup> Civil society can be defined as an arena, separate from the state, the market and the individual household, where people, groups and organisations act together for common interests. Civil society actors are further described as acting primarily for non-profit purposes, which means that they do not distribute profits to members, owners or other persons, but reinvest any profits in their activities, see Government Bill 2009/10:55 *A policy for civil society*, p. 28.

organisations in the country. The Red Cross can also share information about the possibilities for tracing, to the extent that they have such information.

<sup>76</sup>The Resource Centre can also benefit from the Red Cross's experience and contacts in its work to develop country-specific "packages".

country-specific "packages". However, the amount of information available to assist in tracing origins can vary greatly between countries.

### **Internationally, there are several examples of cooperation with civil society to support adopted persons**

The Dutch expert centre INEA has a pilot project called "reconnecting home". It provides support specifically for the five countries investigated by the Joustra Committee. INEA can grant up to €50,000 to associations representing adoptees from these countries to develop a model for how origin searches can be conducted in each country.<sup>77</sup>

Between 2022 and 2024, the Swiss organisation Back to the Roots has received public funding from the cantons to assist people who were adopted to Switzerland from Sri Lanka between the 1970s and 1990s in searching for their origins. Back to the Roots can help investigate the possibilities for tracing, which authorities have been responsible, and find adoption documents in both Switzerland and Sri Lanka. The adopted person can also receive help in finding people in Sri Lanka through various organisations, such as ISS or the Red Cross. Everything is financed by the cantons at a maximum cost of CHF 250,000 per year (just over SEK 300,000).<sup>(78)</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Email to the Adoption Commission from the Swedish Red Cross (Protection and Post- Adoption Research Unit), received on 4 March 2025.

<sup>77</sup> Meeting with INEA in Houten on 3 October 2023.

<sup>78</sup> S. Bitter (2024), 'Switzerland takes first steps to deal with illegal intercountry *adoptions*' in E. Loibl and D. M. Smolin (editors) (2024), *Facing the Past. Policies and Good Practices for Responses to Illegal Intercountry Adoptions*, p. 202.

### **9.7.6 There are opportunities to involve civil society and individuals in adoption-specific support**

There are various ways in which a resource centre can involve organisations and individual adoptees in, for example, searches for origins, return trips and exchanges of experiences.

#### **Fixed-term employment and assignments**

According to the Swedish Agency for Government Employers, government agencies should be cautious about relying heavily on volunteers to carry out their work. If it involves more than occasional tasks or assignments, a fixed-term employment means that both the employer and the employee fall into a system that clarifies rights and obligations regarding scope, rules and responsibilities for insurance, occupational health care and the like.

A government employee has a job with the right to pay, benefits, and labour law protection under laws and collective agreements. The employer manages how the work is done and is responsible for the work environment. Fixed-term employment that may be relevant includes, for example, special fixed-term employment and project-based employment. The employer does not need a reason for fixed-term employment. After 12 months within five years, it becomes a permanent position. Project employment is used for fixed-term assignments with external or separate internal budget funds linked to the project in question. Project employment requires that the work tasks are temporary and outside the scope of normal operations. An ongoing project employment can be extended up to four years if the project continues.

A contractor is self-employed and performs an assignment without being employed. They may be self-employed, but this is not a requirement. Contractors are not covered by collective agreements or employment protection and are responsible for their own taxes and social security contributions. If a person is not employed and performs services for the national resource centre in return for remuneration, it is likely to be a procurement-liable purchase, regardless of whether the contractor has a registered company or not for the procurement laws to apply. Which procurement procedure to use depends, among other things, on

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<sup>79</sup> Govemo. *Analysis of adoption-specific support. Report for the Adoption Commission*. 13 February 2025, p. 9.

the value of the procurement; for example, a service can be directly procured if the value is below the direct procurement threshold.

### **Government agencies may engage unpaid volunteers in their activities.**

Another way for the resource centre to benefit from the experiences of adopted persons is to enable volunteer work to support other adopted persons. There are examples of government agencies that engage individuals in their activities; for example, the Police Authority runs a programme with unpaid volunteers.<sup>80</sup>

## **9.8 The national resource centre shall provide assistance in cases of suspected irregularities in adoptions**

**The investigator's assessment:** Sweden has a responsibility to investigate suspicions of irregularities and to provide support to adoptees who suspect irregularities in their adoption. There will be a need for information and support for adoptees and their families regarding issues of irregularities for a long time to come.

**The investigator's proposal:** The national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues shall be responsible for MFoF's current task of being the national contact point for issues relating to irregularities. The resource centre shall also offer individual support to adopted persons who suspect irregularities in their adoption.

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<sup>80</sup> Governo. *Analysis of adoption-specific support. Report for the Adoption Commission*. 13 February 2025, p. 6.

### **9.8.1      Suspicions of irregularities must be investigated and those affected must receive support.**

The joint statement on illegal adoptions published by several UN special rapporteurs on human rights in September 2022 states that victims of illegal adoptions have the right to know the truth and that states have a responsibility to ensure that all victims receive the assistance they need to find out about their origins. States should take all necessary measures to ensure that all cases of illegal international adoptions are investigated in a thorough, impartial, diligent and effective manner, even if no formal complaint has been lodged. States shall ensure that the authorities investigating illegal international adoptions have access to all relevant documentation, archives and other information so that they can carry out their investigations effectively. States shall also provide the institutions involved in the investigation of illegal international adoptions with sufficient financial and technical resources and qualified personnel to enable them to carry out their work quickly and effectively. States shall also keep statistics on the number of illegal adoptions, including the date of the adoption and the number of persons whose true identity has been re-established. <sup>(81)</sup>

The HCCH also considers that states must investigate suspicions of irregularities in international adoptions. The HCCH has noted that when there are no consequences for irregular conduct, the rules governing adoption activities can become ineffective and impunity can lead to further violations. According to the HCCH, it is difficult to improve existing preventive measures without conducting thorough investigations into the illegal actions that occur.<sup>82</sup> The HCCH guidelines for preventing irregular adoptions state that States should develop accessible and effective systems to enable adoptees to report abuse and seek justice and redress. States should coordinate and support the efforts of authorities and agencies working to detect, receive and refer cases of illegal adoptions. Furthermore, states should assist adoptees, birth parents and adoptive parents who have been affected by illegal practices.

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<sup>81</sup> United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies (2022), *Joint statement on illegal adoption* , pp. 11, 13 and 15.

<sup>82</sup> HCCH (2023), *Toolkit for Preventing and Addressing Illicit Practices in Intercountry Adoption*, p. 16.

in international adoptions. This may involve providing information on the case and on the various services and support available.<sup>83</sup>

### **There is an obligation to restore the child's identity**

The right to identity is a fundamental human right and is enshrined in Article 8 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, among other places. The European Convention does not explicitly protect the right to identity. However the European Court of Human Rights has recognised this right as an integral part of the right to privacy under Article 8. Countries have been found guilty in the European Court of Human Rights of violating Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights for not taking sufficient account of the adopted person's right to their origins.

If a child is unlawfully deprived of part or all of their identity, the child shall be given appropriate support and protection with a view to restoring the child's identity as soon as possible. This follows from Article 8.2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This obligation applies regardless of whether a child has been deprived of part or all of their identity. This means that if, for any reason, a child is deprived only of their name, a State must provide appropriate support and protection with a view to restoring the child's name. The same applies if a child is deprived of their nationality, family relations or any other part of their identity. What is meant by appropriate support and protection for the purpose of quickly restoring a child's identity is not clear from the article or from the preparatory work for the Convention. The wording leaves room for each State to decide what support and protection should be provided, with the only limitation being that the support and protection must be appropriate for the purpose and effective enough to ensure that restoration takes place quickly. However, the Convention does not define what is meant by 'promptly'. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has stated that if a child's identity documents have been issued to the child unlawfully and the child requests the restoration of his or her identity documents, a State should take measures, including issuing corrected documents. (85)

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<sup>83</sup> HCCH (2023), p. 35.

<sup>84</sup> Godelli v. Italy no. 333783/09, 25 September 2012.

<sup>85</sup> SOU 2020:63 *The Hague Convention and Swedish law*, p. 389.

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States are obliged to carry out the process of restoring the child's identity in a way that prevents, or at least minimises, any damage to the child's emotional or psychological development.<sup>86</sup> Reversing an adoption and returning the child to his or her original family may be in the best interests of the child in cases where the illegal circumstances were discovered shortly after the adoption took place or where the child was older at the time of placement. However, if the child was young at the time of adoption and has lived with the adoptive family for some time and become accustomed to the new environment, separation from the adoptive family is likely to cause (further) trauma. In practice, there are only a few reported cases where an adopted child has been returned to its birth parents after an illegal adoption.<sup>87</sup> This applies both to cases where the adoptive family voluntarily returned the child to the birth family and to cases where a court decided that the child should be returned. For example, children have been returned from the United States to their families in Vietnam following the so-called Operation Babylift in 1975.

<sup>88</sup>

**Belgium and Denmark have guidelines for investigating irregularities in historical adoptions.**

In Belgium, the Flemish government has adopted guidelines for dealing with past irregularities in international adoptions. A person who suspects irregularities in an adoption (adoptee, adoptive parent or biological parent) can report their case to the Flemish Central Authority (VCA) via an online service. The VCA interviews the person who reported the case and then provides written feedback to the person concerned about the possibilities for investigating the case. If the person who reported the case and the VCA decide that the case should be investigated further, the VCA will commission an external actor in the country of origin to conduct further investigations. If it emerges that a crime has been committed (e.g. forgery,

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<sup>86</sup> J. Tobin (2019), *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A Commentary*, p. 303.

<sup>87</sup> E. Loibl (2021), "The aftermath of transnational illegal adoptions: Redressing human rights violations in the intercountry adoption system with instruments of transitional justice." *Childhood* 2021, Vol. 28(4), p. 482 f.

<sup>88</sup> D. M. Smolin (2024). Introduction. In E. Loibl and D. M. Smolin (editors). *Facing the Past Policies and Good Practices for Responses to Illegal Intercountry Adoptions*, p. 44 f.

<sup>89</sup> Vlaams Centrum voor Adoptie (Flemish Centre for Adoption).

of documents or abduction of a minor), the VCA is obliged to report this to the Public Prosecutor's Office.<sup>90</sup>

In 2019, the Danish central authority Anke-styrelsen prepared a report on the handling of suspected irregularities.

in adoption cases. Based on the guidelines, the National Board of Appeal investigated suspicions of historical irregularities in five adoption cases from Chile, Bangladesh, Colombia, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Based on the five investigations, the National Board of Appeal has updated the guidelines.

Adoptees who suspect irregularities in their adoption can contact the Appeals Board. The Appeals Board can:

- Review the available documents and, based on this, comment on how the adoption in question relates to the rules and practices that existed at the time. This can help to describe the context in which the adoption took place and thus contribute to the adoptee's understanding of their own adoption process.
- Inform the adopted person of any shortcomings and suspected irregularities.
- Refer the adopted person to organisations that can help adopted persons search for their origins.

Depending on the circumstances of the individual case, adoptees in Denmark may apply to have the adoption annulled in the country of origin, request that the adoption be declared invalid if there is evidence of irregularities, and report criminal acts.<sup>91</sup>

### **9.8.2 MFoF has a temporary assignment to be the national contact point for issues relating to irregularities.**

Since 2022, MFoF has had a temporary government assignment to serve as the national contact point for issues relating to irregularities in international adoptions. The assignment has been extended and will be finalised

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<sup>90</sup> Flemish Centre for Adoption. *Dsenvetlensng betteffende pteventsve en aanpak (mogelsjke) sllegal adoptses. 2025.*

<sup>91</sup> Ankestyrelsen (2022), *Adopted children's right to their own identity. The importance of handling the legality of international adoption cases*. September 2022.

by February 2027 at the latest.<sup>92</sup> According to the terms of reference, the authority shall be able to refer cases to the appropriate actor and offer support and assistance within the scope of its responsibilities. As a point of contact, MFoF shall keep itself updated on relevant investigations both in Sweden and internationally, including the criminal investigation in Chile concerning the abduction of children and irregularities in international adoptions from the country during the 1970s and 1990s. Furthermore, the authority shall inform itself about the challenges and issues faced by adoptees from Chile, but also by adoptees from other countries where there are suspicions or reports of irregularities. The authority shall actively disseminate information about the function of the assignment to relevant target groups in Sweden and internationally to central authorities and other actors deemed to be of significance. With regard to the part of the assignment that concerns referring individuals to the right actor and offering support and assistance within the framework of the authority's responsibility, the MFoF has limited the assignment to providing information about available contact channels in the countries of origin, as well as support in searching for origins and counselling.<sup>93</sup> The MFoF has chosen to limit the assignment to not investigating suspicions of irregularities in individual cases.

During its term of office, the Authority has collected and made available relevant information for adoptees who have suspicions or information about irregularities, both through direct contact with adoptee associations and by launching a special web portal on the Authority's website. The portal contains information about the assignment as a point of contact, about some of the countries that are of particular interest to adoptees, and about the various types of support available. In dialogue with adoptee associations, the agency has been able to focus its work on current events and form an opinion on the needs of adoptees affected by information about irregularities in adoptions. A number of information initiatives have been carried out with the aim of spreading awareness of the assignment and the support that the authority provides to adoptees. (⁹⁴)

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<sup>92</sup> Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (2025). *Assignment to the Authority for Family and Parenting Support n providing support to internationally adopted persons and adoptive parents*. S2025/00113.

<sup>93</sup> MFoF (2024). *Slrtappott National contact point for children who are victims of irregularities in the international adoption system*. Government assignment S2021/08111 (partial). December 2024, pp. 4 and 15.

<sup>94</sup> MFoF (2024). *Slrtappot National contact point for children who are victims of irregularities in international adoption*. Government assignment S2021/08111 (partial). February 2024, p. 3.

**MFoF considers that the mandate as a national contact point should be extended and made permanent**

In a report on the assignment as national contact point for issues relating to irregularities, MFoF describes that it has limited the assignment to referring cases to the right actor and offering support and assistance within the framework of the authority's responsibility to provide information about available contact channels in the countries of origin, as well as through support in searching for origins and conversation support. However, the MFoF considers that there is a need to investigate the need for and possible forms of individual support, including in cases of irregularities. The MFoF considers that better conditions for long-term work could be provided, for example through an addition to the authority's instructions or by extending the authority's mandate as a national contact point and increasing its funding.<sup>(95)</sup>

**9.8.3 The Resource Centre shall offer individual support to adoptees who suspect irregularities in their adoption**

In recent years, several countries, including Belgium, Chile, Denmark, Norway, France, Switzerland, Sweden and South Korea, have set up inquiries to investigate the occurrence of irregularities in international adoption activities. It is likely that more countries will follow in their footsteps. I therefore believe that there will continue to be a great need among adoptees and their families for information and support in matters concerning suspicions of irregularities in their own adoption.

The MFoF has a temporary assignment to serve as the national contact point for issues relating to irregularities in international adoptions. The work that the MFoF has done within the framework of its contact point assignment, including the web portal, should continue to be developed and expanded by the national resource centre. It is also proposed that the resource centre should offer individual support to adoptees who suspect irregularities in their adoption. In this regard, the support offered by the central authorities in Belgium and Denmark to individuals who suspect irregularities in their adoptions can serve as a model.

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<sup>95</sup> MFoF. *Slrttappott National contact point for persons who suspect irregularities in their international adoption*. Government assignment S2021/08111 (partial). February 2024, pp. 3 and 15 f.

leadership. The Resource Centre should gather and make available the information available in the case and inform the individual about how the process should have been conducted according to the laws and procedures of both Sweden and the country of origin, as well as any shortcomings in the case in question. The resource centre should also provide information about the possibilities for, for example, re-establishing the adopted person's identity, re-establishing citizenship and reporting the matter to the police. The resource centre should also provide information about the adoption-specific support that is available, such as counselling.

**Children should also, after an individual assessment, be offered support if irregularities are suspected.**

Since resource centres, after an individual assessment, should be able to offer support to children in their search for their origins, I believe that children should also be offered individual support in cases of suspected irregularities. It is important, not least on the basis of the obligation under Article 8.2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to provide appropriate support and protection if a child has been unlawfully deprived of part or all of their identity. The resource centre may assess in each individual case what support is appropriate to offer based on the child's maturity. The child's own opinions and wishes are an important starting point in the assessment. Any need for psychosocial support that may arise is offered through the resource centre's counselling service.

## **9.9 The MFoF and the National Board of Forensic Medicine shall investigate the conditions for a national DNA database**

**The investigator's assessment:** It is not reasonable that adopted persons, partly as a result of deficiencies in the adoption documents, should be referred to commercial companies to obtain more information about their origins. As one of the largest recipient countries in the world, Sweden should heed the UN's call to establish a national DNA database to facilitate searches for origins and, where appropriate, the restoration of identity.

**The investigator's proposal:** The National Board of Forensic Medicine and MFoF should be tasked with investigating the practical and legal conditions for establishing a national DNA database for adopted persons.

### **9.9.1 Adoptees want free DNA testing and a national DNA database**

There is currently no national DNA database for adopted persons in Sweden. Adopted persons who wish to search for their origins through DNA must therefore use private companies that offer DNA testing to find connections to living relatives. In a joint statement, several organisations for adopted persons have called on Sweden to urgently create opportunities for adopted persons to take DNA tests free of charge and for these to be collected in a national database, or alternatively sent to the relevant Swedish embassies and consulates, which in turn send them

the tests for matching in the adopted person's country of origin. They also want Sweden to encourage the countries with which it cooperates to meet the needs of adopted persons to be matched with family members, so that these countries also work to DNA test people in their countries.<sup>96</sup>

Contributions to DNA testing and a national DNA database that ensures the protection of the privacy of those registered have also been raised in our focus groups and interviews. The AC also emphasises that it supports the wishes of adoptees in both these areas.<sup>97</sup>

### **9.9.2 UN human rights bodies call on states to create DNA databases to reunite families**

In the joint statement on illegal adoptions published by several UN special human rights rapporteurs in September 2022, they called on states to ensure that all victims of illegal adoptions receive the assistance they need to find out about their origins.

The state should play an active role in the work of searching for and locating

<sup>96</sup> Joint statement by AEF, AFO, AKF, Chileadoption.se, SKAN and TAR at the national seminar in May 2023.

<sup>97</sup> Statement adopted at the Adoption Centre Association Meeting in Malmö on 28 May 2023.

locate missing children. For example, states should create a DNA database for all cases of unlawful removal, forced removal, or falsification of identity that have been reported, with the aim of re-establishing the identity of victims of illegal international adoptions.<sup>98</sup> We are only aware of two countries that have established some form of national DNA database for adopted persons: Chile and South Korea<sup>99</sup>, see also Volume 2, Chapter 12.

### **9.9.3 The conditions for establishing a national DNA database for adopted persons should be investigated**

I believe that the Swedish state has a responsibility to assist adopted persons who wish to search for their origins through DNA. Both the Parenting Code and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1993 Hague Convention emphasise the right to know one's origins as far as possible. It is unreasonable that adopted persons, partly as a result of deficiencies in adoption documents, should be referred to commercial companies in order to obtain more information about their origins. As one of the largest recipient countries in the world, Sweden should heed the UN's call to establish a national DNA database to facilitate searches for origins and, where appropriate, the restoration of identity.

It will take time to build up a national database, and it will only be able to provide matches for full siblings who are in Sweden. A national DNA database therefore does not meet the short-term needs of adopted persons searching for their origins. At the same time, this cannot be a reason for Sweden not to begin long-term work on creating a database that will eventually make it possible to match the DNA of a Swedish adoptee against DNA databases in other countries. In order to be able to match samples from other countries' national DNA databases, the countries must use the same genetic markers. This requires a certain degree of international coordination, similar to that of Interpol's DNA database, for example, in order to agree on which markers to use.

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<sup>98</sup> United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies. *Joint statement on legal certainty adoptions*, published on 28 September 2022, p. 15.

<sup>99</sup> Argentina may have some form of DNA database aimed at reuniting families separated during the military dictatorship.

The National Board of Forensic Medicine (RMV) has informed the Adoption Board that DNA samples can be analysed by the RMV or by the regions, but that another government agency in Sweden may be responsible for the DNA database itself. The RMV is the central administrative authority for forensic genetics and is responsible, among other things, for conducting paternity and kinship investigations for municipalities, courts and the Migration Agency. The RMV also conducts paternity and kinship investigations on behalf of individuals. I therefore believe that the RMV has both the expertise and the technical capabilities to be responsible for analysing samples from adopted persons. I also believe that it is most appropriate for the MFoF to be the principal for the database containing the analysis results from the samples analysed by the RMV. I therefore propose that the RMV and the MFoF be tasked with investigating the practical and legal conditions for establishing a national DNA database for adopted persons. This involves, for example, determining which genetic markers are required to match samples from other countries' national DNA databases, how international coordination can be achieved, and the need for new rules on confidentiality and personal data processing. A national DNA database may only contain DNA profiles from persons who have consented to provide samples. The state's financial responsibility shall include both the costs of sampling and analysis of the samples. It shall therefore be completely free of charge for adopted persons who wish to provide a DNA sample to be included in the Swedish national DNA database.

Both RMV and MFoF employees have stated that RMV can already assist with DNA testing to verify kinship in cases where an adopted person wants to establish kinship with a potential parent or sibling. This may be the case, for example, if a match has been found through one of the private DNA companies or if a parent or sibling has been found in some other way. We have considered a financial contribution from the state for a forensic genetic test at RMV for the purpose of verifying kinship with a parent or sibling. However, I do not consider this to be a viable option. Currently, an investigation by the RMV of two DNA samples costs SEK 19,000. The contribution would be limited to individuals who already have a match that they wish to have confirmed. Furthermore, it is not possible to save the test results (DNA profile) as there is not yet a national DNA database. Overall

I believe that this would be of very limited benefit at great expense. It would be better to devote these resources to building up a national database and then offering free DNA testing.

## 9.10 Guidance on searching archives

**The investigator's assessment:** People who have been adopted internationally need better guidance and support in finding their adoption documents. Today, adoption documents are stored in several different archives and there is no clear guidance on where the documents are located, which makes searching difficult and means that not everyone has access to the documents relating to their adoption. It is problematic that private individuals who have arranged adoptions keep adoption documents and that individual adoptees are therefore unable to access their adoption documents.

**The investigator's proposal:** In order to store adoption records in a more centralised manner than is currently the case, the MFoF should store adoption documents relating to individuals at the National Archives. This means that the records currently stored in the MFoF's archives in Skellefteå should instead be stored at the National Archives. Furthermore, it means that when BFA and AC have completed their mediation activities and are therefore required to hand over their documentation to MFoF in accordance with Section 8 b of the LIA, the files currently stored at the National Archives should remain there and the files stored in AC's local archive should be moved to the National Archives. The aim is to make it easier for adopted persons to access their documents.

The Resource Centre should, in cooperation with the National Archives, municipal archives and district court archives, develop guidelines with advice and support for adopted persons on where and how to find their adoption documents. In its work with the National Archives Database (NAD), the National Archives should also compile search paths for the various archives, thereby making it easier for individuals to find their adoption documents.

I would like to strongly urge private individuals who hold documents from adoption agencies relating to individuals to hand over these documents to the National Archives.

### **9.10.1 Increased coordination of adoption documents and improved guidance on where the documents are located**

Adopted persons have the right to access their adoption documents. However, many adopted persons report that they have difficulty finding and accessing their adoption documents. Those who search for their adoption documents often need to contact various archives to ensure that they have access to all documents: the National Archives – both in Täby and at the various regional units, municipal archives and district court archives in different parts of the country. They may also need to contact other authorities such as adoption organisations, the Tax Agency and the Migration Agency. Another reason why it can be difficult to know where documents are located is that it depends on where the adoptive parents were registered at the time of the adoption. It may therefore be necessary to obtain information from the population register in order to find adoption documents. In some cases, district courts have been reorganised and merged, which may affect where district court records are kept.

Many of those we interviewed believe that adoption records should be stored in a state archive. This is because they have felt opposed by AC when requesting access to their adoption records, and they are also unsure whether the organisation discloses all records. Several have experienced that the AC has not released all documents immediately, but only when the adopted person has returned and asked if there is more. Adopted persons have also stated that the AC has sorted through documents in connection with the transfer of material to the National Archives. In a joint statement, several Swedish associations and networks for adopted persons have stated to

the Swedish Parliament that adoptees today are at the mercy of adoption organisations and private individuals' arbitrary decisions about what should be saved, discarded, disclosed or withheld. They believe that adoptees' adoption records should be stored in a centralised state archive – preferably the National Archives. <sup>(100)</sup>AC also believes that adoption documents should be stored at the National Archives. <sup>(101)</sup>It is important to also include documentation that exists about individual adoption organisations.

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<sup>100</sup> Joint statement by AEF, AFO, AKF, Chileadoption.se, SKAN and TAR at the Riks's seminar in May 2023.

<sup>101</sup> Meeting with AC on 26 October 2023 and Adoptionscentrum's interest policy programme (IPP), <https://www.adoptionscentrum.se/app/uploads/2023/01/ipp-februari-2022.pdf>. Retrieved on 28 October 2024.

mediation activities and not just the individual files, as this provides valuable information about how the activities were conducted. This is also a requirement under the LIA.

#### **9.10.2 Adoption documents should be stored by fewer actors and there must be good guidelines.**

Some adopted persons believe that all adoption documents should be collected in a state archive, so that adoptees only need to contact one authority to obtain all documents relating to the adoption. Others, however, want an actor with knowledge of where adoption documents are located to guide the adopted person in finding the adoption documents. I believe that it would require considerable resources to collect all adoption records, including those held in municipal archives and district court archives, at the National Archives. I therefore consider it unrealistic to submit such a proposal. It would also be contrary to current archiving principles in Sweden and internationally, where documents should be kept together, stored and searched for at the organisation where they originated. However, I do consider it reasonable that the adoption documents currently stored in the MFoF archives in Skellefteå, which relate to documentation from authorised associations that have ceased to exist, should instead be stored at the National Archives. When BFA and AC have ceased their mediation activities and are therefore required to hand over their documentation to MFoF in accordance with Section 8 b of the LIA, the files currently stored at the National Archives should remain there and the files stored in AC's local archive should be moved to the National Archives. In this way, the adoption documents that have been mediated through NIA and authorised associations over time will be collected by one entity, the National Archives.

The fact that the adoption documents will continue to be stored in several archives and in several locations makes it very important that the resource centre, together with the National Archives and other archives, guide adopted persons in accessing all the documentation available about their adoption.

The National Archives has already developed an internal guide to assist adopted persons who wish to access their adoption documents, and they have extensive knowledge of how to help adopted persons in their search. The National Archives has also produced initial guidance for the archives that can be used externally. The authority may

, within the scope of its service responsibility, produce guides and instructions on how and where to find what you are looking for, for example based on when and where you were adopted. To ensure that adoptees have access to the latest version of such manuals, the archives themselves should keep them up to date, and the resource centre can link to the archives and their manuals or quick reference guides on its web portal. The resource centre should publish general guidance on its web portal and link to the various archives' more specific manuals on how to search their archives. This will ensure that the guidance is kept up to date with the latest information.

Since 2024, the National Archives has also been tasked with developing the National Archives Database (NAD). Unfortunately, the NAD cannot link or connect different archives (e.g. municipal and district court archives). However, through the NAD, the National Archives could collect links to various archives relating to international adoption, thereby making it easier for individuals to find their way around the archives and search for information themselves.

### **9.10.3 Private individuals who have arranged adoptions cannot be required to submit documentation to the National Archives, but they should do so.**

Some individuals who have been involved in arranging adoptions to Sweden have their own private archives containing information about the adoptions they have arranged. This applies to both individuals who have arranged adoptions privately and through authorised adoption organisations. When these individuals do not wish to disclose the documents, adoptees are denied access to the complete documentation regarding their adoption and background. Since the documentation held by these private individuals is not covered by Section 8 c of the LIA, they are under no obligation to disclose copies of these documents. There are examples of attempts to obtain documentation from private individuals who have been involved in international adoption activities. In 2011, the MIA sent a letter to individuals who had been involved in international adoptions, urging them to submit adoption documents to the National Archives. The National Archives then sent a letter to eight intermediaries offering to receive documents. However, only one person submitted documents,

and this is still the only private archive held by the National Archives. The National Archives has since compiled a list of individuals who may have private archives containing adoption documents. I would like to strongly urge private individuals who hold documents from adoption agencies relating to specific individuals to submit these documents to the National Archives.

## 9.11 Knowledge support for professionals

**The investigator's assessment:** Knowledge about adopted persons and adoption-related issues needs to be increased among professionals in municipalities and regions who encounter internationally adopted persons in their work.

**The investigator's proposal:** The Resource Centre for Adopted Persons and Adoption Issues shall compile existing knowledge about adoption, adopted persons and other relevant areas such as trauma, attachment and racism. This knowledge shall be communicated to professionals who encounter adopted persons in their work.

The knowledge should be communicated through the web portal (information and general web-based training), telephone counselling and targeted training initiatives. Professionals who have undergone training and increased their adoption-specific competence should be made visible in some way in regular activities so that adoptees who wish to do so can find and be referred there.

The Resource Centre should utilise the National Board of Health and Welfare's existing structures for knowledge management to disseminate adoption-specific knowledge within social services and health care. The Resource Centre should also work to introduce adoption-specific knowledge into other related activities, such as relevant strategies and knowledge support, as well as telephone helplines.

In the long term, however, knowledge gaps should be filled. The resource centre should identify the need for new knowledge in the field of adoption and, based on such a needs analysis, promote the research and knowledge development that is needed. The resource centre should communicate the need for research to relevant research bodies and research funders. The Government and research funders should pay attention to the issue of adoption in future initiatives and allocate

funds to stimulate research in the field of adoption, for example by announcing funding for research projects in the field of adoption.

### **9.11.1 There is a need for knowledge-raising initiatives for municipalities and regions on adoption-related issues.**

Already in the research hearing conducted by the 2003 adoption inquiry, participants emphasised the need to manage and understand the adoption-related knowledge that had already been gathered. Society and professions that encounter adopted persons must, in turn, become better at utilising the knowledge and research that exists.

Many expressed the need for a national knowledge centre or resource centre to gather knowledge, expertise and research results on adopted persons and adoptive families as a basis for support and counselling.

In its 2022 survey, the National Board of Health and Welfare noted that there is a lack of collective knowledge that would benefit adoptees, their relatives and professionals. The National Board of Health and Welfare emphasised that there needs to be knowledge and expertise about adoption-specific circumstances and needs among various actors in healthcare and social services, and that this needs to be available at different times in the adopted person's life. Several actors in the National Board of Health and Welfare's study expressed that knowledge about, for example, racism and discrimination, trauma and the identity development of adopted persons must be available to people who meet adopted persons in their profession. (103)

Mattias Strand and Natte Hillerberg's interview study from 2024 also highlighted the need for increased knowledge about adoption-related issues among therapists and other healthcare professionals. They showed that there is a need for increased knowledge in several areas, such as how adoption trauma, racism and other post-adoption factors affect the health of adopted persons. Several participants in their study also emphasised the need for complementary psychotherapeutic methods in addition to CBT. (104)

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<sup>102</sup> SOU 2003:49, *Volume 2*, p. 363 ff.

<sup>103</sup> Socialstyrelsen (2022), p. 10; Documentation from Socialstyrelsen, received on 14 February 2025.

<sup>104</sup> M. Strand and N. Hillerberg (2024).

In our interviews, both internationally adopted persons and persons who encounter adoptees in their profession have emphasised that competence and knowledge about adoption-related issues need to be increased. This applies to society in general, but especially to professionals in social services, child and adolescent psychiatry, adult psychiatry, other health care services and youth clinics. They need more knowledge about adoption and racism, for example. Some adoptees feel that they often have to educate others and explain how adoptions work and that adoptees can relate to their adoption in different ways. Our interviews have also revealed that there is a need for increased competence regarding adoptees, mental illness and racism in preschools and schools in order to be able to support adopted children. School staff need to understand and, when necessary, identify adopted children, as adoptees are overrepresented when it comes to mental illness. Many adoptees have experienced trauma and various psychiatric problems. School health services in particular need greater expertise and awareness of the need to pay extra attention to the well-being and behaviour of adopted children so that they can receive the right care and support. Staff in schools and preschools need to be able to talk about how we look different and address issues of racism.

This knowledge, and thus the ability of professionals to identify these needs, is in line with the rights of the child as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For example, Article 6 states that States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child, and Article 24 emphasises the child's right to the highest attainable standard of health and access to health care and rehabilitation, and that States Parties have an obligation to strive to fully realise this right.

### **9.11.2 New knowledge and research are needed in the field of adoption**

As early as 2003, the Adoption Inquiry noted that research and knowledge development on international adoption was a neglected area that needed to be prioritised. Nor was there any public actor tasked with identifying research needs, coordinating research and disseminating research results to the professions that encounter adopted persons and adoptive families. The inquiry therefore proposed that the Government establish a national research and

knowledge centre for international adoption issues. However, the government did not establish such a knowledge centre.<sup>105</sup> Our investigation shows that the need for adoption-related knowledge remains.

We have commissioned the Swedish Agency for Health Technology Assessment and Social Services (SBU) to investigate whether there is any research showing how different interventions affect the mental and physical health of adopted persons. The SBU notes that there is a lack of well-conducted systematic reviews that have examined interventions and the need for interventions specifically targeted at adult adoptees. Nor are there any well-conducted systematic reviews that have studied the significance of the different backgrounds and circumstances of adopted children for the need for interventions and the effect of those interventions. However, the SBU identified well-conducted systematic reviews that have examined the effect of interventions for adoptive families and adoptive parents on the mental health and attachment of adopted persons. However, the ability to draw conclusions about the effect was limited by large differences between the included primary studies and, in some cases, low study quality. (<sup>106</sup>)

Based on interviews, focus groups, documentation submitted to the Adoption Commission and previous studies, we have identified some areas where there is a need for new knowledge and research:

- more knowledge to understand the causes of adopted persons' poorer physical and mental health and social living conditions,
- what knowledge-based and effective methods of psychosocial support for adoptees are available,
- knowledge about trauma linked to adoption,
- older adopted persons and their need for support, and
- what specific measures work for adoptive families where the child has neuropsychiatric problems, and how adoptive parents' mental and emotional resources affect the children who have been adopted.

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<sup>105</sup> SOU 2003:49.

<sup>106</sup> SBU. *Compilation of systematic reviews from the SBU Information Service. Mental and physical health problems in adopted children and adults*. Short answer from SBU's Information Service, ref. no. 24-1024, 28 February 2025.

The analysis of the research summary in the 2003 report problematised the existing research. Among other things, the researchers called for more longitudinal studies and studies that highlighted different phases in the lives of adopted persons, the occurrence and analysis of risk factors in the countries of origin and the outcomes they produced, more studies of identity development, comparative studies of adoptions that had gone very badly and adoptions that had gone very well, and studies that highlighted the effects of ongoing support and treatment efforts for adopted persons and adoptive families. (107)

### **9.11.3 Research in the field of adoption should be encouraged.**

As we have shown above, there is agreement that knowledge and competence regarding adoption-related issues need to be increased in society, and this is particularly important among professionals who encounter adoptees in their work. To achieve this, new knowledge needs to be developed, and existing knowledge needs to be compiled and disseminated. There are various ways to achieve this.

In order to generate new knowledge that is useful for professionals who encounter internationally adopted persons in their work, relevant and applicable research needs to be promoted. I have considered whether it is sufficient for the resource centre to establish contact with researchers and research funders and explain the need for new knowledge.

in order to promote research in this area. However, my assessment is that this would not be sufficient, but that it needs to be supplemented with targeted funds to stimulate research in the field of adoption. I therefore propose that the government also allocate special funds to a suitable research funding body for calls for proposals for funding research projects in the field of adoption. It is better for the government to earmark funds for adoption-related research to a research funding body than for the resource centre itself to allocate research funds. However, the resource centre should have certain funds at its disposal to be able to allocate funds for assignments to compile knowledge and carry out evaluations in the field of adoption.

Research funding bodies such as Forte and the Swedish Research Council sometimes issue calls for proposals for funding for thematic research projects, for example on segregation, the environment and women's health. With regard to the field of adoption, the Swedish Research Council has previously issued a call for proposals for funding for a thematic research project on adoption.

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<sup>107</sup> SOU 2003:49, *Volume 2*, p. 77 ff.

women's health, the government first commissioned Forte to work with the Swedish Research Council to map and analyse research needs in the field of women's health and diseases. They then submitted a report on existing research needs and proposals for a research initiative in this area.<sup>108</sup> In the Government's research bill of December 2024, women's health is one of the designated initiatives for the years 2025–2028, with the Government allocating special funds to both Forte and the Swedish Research Council to conduct research in this area.<sup>109</sup> Adoption could be one such theme in the future. If a similar initiative is implemented in the field of adoption, the resource centre's task should be to inform researchers and research funders about the need for knowledge and then to compile and disseminate the research that is produced.

One option that has been considered is for the centre to establish cooperation with a specific educational institution through agreements or contracts. However, this risks being too limiting, given the breadth of research and knowledge development that may be needed. A better alternative is, as in our proposal, to let the need for new knowledge be the guiding principle and give different educational institutions the opportunity to conduct research so that the most suitable institution in each case can carry out the research.

#### **9.11.4 Adoption-specific expertise should be made visible in regular activities**

Professionals who have undergone training and increased their adoption-specific expertise need to be made visible in regular activities in some way so that adopted people who want to can find them and make it easier for other professionals to know where to refer someone who wants to meet someone with adoption-specific expertise. There are several ways to achieve this.

We have tried different alternatives for how professionals who have developed their skills to a certain level at the resource centre can be made visible in regular activities. One such alternative is certification, corresponding to LGBTQI certification. One such alternative is certification, similar to LGBTQI certification. However, certification often involves an extensive training process, verification of qualifications before certification is granted, and a requirement that the certificate be renewed after a few years. This is something that could potentially

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<sup>108</sup> Forte (2023), *Kvinnors hälsa och sjukdomar. Kattläggning och analys av fotskningsbehov*.

<sup>109</sup> Prop. 2024/25:60 *Footwear and footwear for comfort, novelty and utility*.

be developed in the longer term. Initially, however, it is better that those who have completed the resource centre's training courses receive a course certificate confirming their adoption-specific skills and interest. Such a certificate can be used to highlight their competence on the organisation's website, etc. Another possibility is for the resource centre to have a list on its web portal, or links to, those individuals who wish to be included there after completing the training.

#### **9.11.5 The starting point is that existing activities and structures should be utilised**

The resource centre should compile existing knowledge about adoption, adoptees and other relevant areas such as trauma, attachment and racism. This knowledge should be communicated to professionals who encounter adoptees in their work, including those in social services, psychiatry, schools, preschools and youth clinics.

My starting point has been to, as far as possible, submit proposals that are based on and strengthen existing activities and structures within government control. The resource centre should continue to build on the knowledge and experience that MFoF has accumulated in its assignments to date. The resource centre will provide advanced knowledge support and offer everything from information and online training on the web portal on issues relating to adoptees and adoption, to targeted adoption-specific training for various professional groups. In order to increase effectiveness, it is important that the National Board of Health and Welfare can assist the resource centre in the development of knowledge support when necessary, and that the resource centre and the National Board of Health and Welfare collaborate in providing knowledge-enhancing support to professionals in social services and health care. This increases the chances of the support having an impact in practical work in the field. It is particularly important that the National Board of Health and Welfare helps to disseminate knowledge support to health and medical care, as the National Board of Health and Welfare already has established structures and greater trust than other actors in matters relating to care and nursing.

One way to build on and strengthen existing activities and structures is for the resource centre to work to incorporate adoption-specific knowledge into other related activities, such as existing support guidelines and knowledge support, as well as in the implementation of

existing strategies. This is better and more effective than the resource centre starting its own helpline for adopted persons, or the government, in collaboration with the resource centre, developing a special national strategy for adoption issues. The resource centre should disseminate adoption-specific knowledge to existing helplines, such as the national helpline for mental health and suicide prevention, MIND's suicide helpline and lifeline, and the BRIS helpline. The resource centre can then refer adopted persons who have a more urgent need for counselling to these helplines. The resource centre should also work to raise awareness of the adopted group through the implementation of, for example, the national strategy for mental health and suicide prevention. Adopted persons are not mentioned as a particularly vulnerable group in this strategy, despite the fact that adopted persons have been shown to have an increased risk of mental ill health and suicide. Sub-goal 2 of this strategy is about strengthening and developing the conditions for good mental health in children and young people, including by becoming better at identifying and paying attention to children who have experienced trauma and being able to offer them early intervention. Sub-goal 4 focuses on developing professional approaches in public services that encounter people with mental ill health or suicidal tendencies, as well as developing interventions for groups at increased risk of mental ill health. The Resource Centre should also disseminate adoption-specific knowledge to the National Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (NASP) and their regional suicide coordinators.

Other relevant authorities, regions and municipalities should also pay attention to adoption-specific needs in current initiatives, assignments and knowledge support. The Resource Centre should review which other existing activities may need to strengthen their knowledge of adoption-related issues. This could include, for example, raising the profile of the adopted group in the implementation of the national strategy for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Adopted persons are not mentioned as a particularly vulnerable group in either the strategy or the action plan for SRHR. Research has shown that internationally adopted persons find it more difficult than others to establish and maintain relationships and therefore live alone in adulthood, which increases the risk of depression and suicide. <sup>110</sup>Sexologist Anna Linde has shown in several studies that SRHR can be an important part of the mental health of internationally adopted persons.

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<sup>110</sup> A. Hjern and B. Vinnerljung (2022), pp. 3 and 19 ff.

She shows that they have been subjected to abusive treatment and exoticisation, that they have received inadequate care in the health and medical services, and that the SRHR perspective is often missing when discussing the mental health of adopted persons.<sup>111</sup>

One possibility is for the resource centre to conduct certain contract training courses that are paid for by the client. However, the assessment is that the training courses developed should, as far as possible, be free of charge or offered at cost price so that regions and municipalities have the opportunity to use and take advantage of the training courses, regardless of their financial situation. This is what Barnafrid has chosen to do with its training courses for professionals.

## **9.12 Adoptees should be entitled to financial assistance for a trip to their country of origin**

**The investigator's assessment:** The right to identity and knowledge of one's origins is a fundamental human right. In view of the shortcomings in many people's adoption documents, Sweden has a special responsibility to assist and facilitate adopted persons in finding out about their origins, if possible. Financial assistance for a trip to the country of origin is an important part of this.

**The investigator's proposal:** Adopted persons should be able to receive a financial contribution of up to 25 per cent of the price base amount to enable them to travel to their country of origin. The contribution shall replace the current adoption allowance that adoptive parents can receive after an adoption arranged through an authorised adoption organisation. The grant shall be paid in arrears against proof of expenditure and administered by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency.

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<sup>111</sup> Anna Linde's documentation from an interview study on the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of adoptees, submitted to the Adoption Commission on 2 May 2024; Anna Linde (2023), *Internatational adoptees sexual health - To be seen or to be vssssble*. Master's thesis, Malmö University, Faculty of Health and Society.

### 9.12.1 Adoptees should receive financial assistance for return travel

Given the shortcomings in the adoption documents of many adopted persons, it is often impossible to find out about one's origins through documentation. Even in cases where the mother's name is known, it can be very difficult to search without further information. In order to find out about one's origins, it is therefore often necessary to conduct both DNA searches and on-site investigations in the country of origin. Returning to the country of origin is often expensive, especially in cases involving countries outside Europe. As a rule, the adopted person also needs to hire an interpreter on site to be able to communicate with the authorities and, in cases of reunification, with the original family.

Adoptees, MFoF<sup>112</sup>, BFA<sup>113</sup> and AC<sup>114</sup> are all calling for financial support to enable adoptees to return to their country of origin. For some, a return trip is about trying to find their original family, while others want to make a trip to reconnect with the country, language and culture. For some adoptees, the opportunity to return to their country of origin can provide relief from challenging existential questions. A return trip can help to provide a more complete picture of the adoptee's identity and history, and even reshape their life story and provide a sense of context. How a person views their life story and sense of context plays a significant role in their health and well-being. Many adoptees emphasise that a return trip is not a holiday. This is partly because a return trip involves additional costs, for example for interpreters, visits to authorities and hiring people to provide practical assistance in the country.

Secondly, because a trip to the country of origin is about identity and can be emotionally overwhelming and painful. Some therefore want to be able to travel back together with their family.

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<sup>112</sup> MFoF (2022), *Project with special support for internationally adopted children seeking parental care*. p. 27; MFoF (2024), *Special support for internationally adopted children seeking parental care*, p. 17.

<sup>113</sup> BFA (2018), *Providing continuous support to adoptees and their families*.  
<https://www.bfa.se/medlem/adoptionernas-framtid/bfa-stallningstagande-2018/>. Retrieved 2025-04-08.

<sup>114</sup> Adoptionscentrum's interest policy programme (IPP),  
<https://www.adoptionscentrum.se/app/uploads/2023/01/ipp-februari-2022.pdf>. Retrieved 28 October 2024.

**Adoptive parents receive an adoption allowance, but adoptees receive no financial support when searching for their origins.**

Several of the people we interviewed stated that adoptive parents receive an adoption grant of SEK 75,000 from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. A prerequisite for the adoption grant to be paid is that the adoption has been arranged by an authorised adoption organisation. One purpose of the adoption grant is to prevent economically disadvantaged groups from being excluded from the possibility of adopting. <sup>(115)</sup> Adopted persons believe that if the state has provided financial support to adoptive parents to adopt children, the state should also provide adopted persons with financial support to enable them to search for their origins. This is particularly true given that many adopted persons lack background information in their adoption documents, or sometimes have incorrect information. Some suggest that an alternative could be for the state to provide means-tested assistance to make the possibility of return trips more equitable. Those who are most in need of a return trip may be those with the least financial means to do so.

**Adoptees should receive a travel grant to enable them to return to their country of origin.**

Since the state has actively participated in international adoption activities, I believe that the state has a responsibility to ensure that people who have been adopted to Sweden, in most cases without having had the opportunity to decide on the adoption themselves, are given the opportunity to return to their country of origin once in their lifetime. I therefore propose that those who wish to return to their country of origin should receive financial support to enable them to do so. There is a great need for financial support for a return trip, and the time for reunification is running out for many. The parents of those who were adopted in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s are elderly and may soon be gone.

This also applies to other people who may have knowledge and who can contribute to the search for origins. Crucial information in the countries of origin is disappearing as the years go by. I would like to emphasise that the travel grant is not a form of financial compensation for people who have been affected by irregularities in their adoption. The travel grant is

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<sup>115</sup> Prop. 1988/89:3 *on the adoption of foreign children*, pp. 6 and 8.

financial support aimed at all persons who have been adopted from another country.

I have considered limiting the travel grant to those individuals who lack information about their origins in their documentation. However, such a limitation would lead to difficult assessments in practice. Even if the name of a parent is included in the adoption documents, it can be very difficult to search without other information, such as an ID number or place of residence. Since the right to origin is not only about biological origin but also cultural origin, I believe that the travel grant should cover all adopted persons, regardless of whether they have information about their biological origin or not. For some adoptees, biological origin is very important, while for others it is more important to learn more about the country they come from.

I have considered what costs the travel grant should cover, such as travel, vaccinations, accommodation, interpreters and transport in the country. I also believe it is important for adopted persons to be able to travel with a relative, which entails additional costs. Taking into account the number of internationally adopted

With just over 50,000 people in Sweden, I believe that travel grants should only cover the actual costs of the journey to the country of origin, i.e. not accommodation and other expenses. I believe that the most important thing is that the travel grant can lower the threshold so that as many adopted persons as possible are given the financial means to make a once-in-a-lifetime return trip to their country of origin. However, I would like to emphasise that it would have been desirable if the state had been able to offer a travel grant that covers the costs that are actually associated with a return trip.

I have considered the possibility of differentiating the maximum amount based on country or continent. However, in order to reduce the administrative burden of the grant, I propose that travel grants should be paid for the actual costs of travel to and from the adoptee's country of origin, up to a maximum amount of 25 per cent of the price base amount. The amount is linked to the price base amount in order to index-link the travel grant over time. In 2025, the proposal would mean a travel grant of up to SEK 14,700.

### **9.12.2 Contributions for return travel shall be administered by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency.**

The provisions on adoption grants are found in Chapter 21 of the Social Insurance Code. The adoption allowance is a residence-based benefit. This means that anyone who is resident in Sweden is insured for adoption allowance (Chapter 5, Section 9 of the Social Insurance Code). In Chapter 8, I propose that the Act (1997:192) on International Adoption Services should be repealed. As a result of this proposal, the adoption allowance should also be abolished. I propose that the allowance for tracing one's origins should replace the current adoption allowance in Chapter 21 of the Social Insurance Code and be administered by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency.

Contributions for return travel may be granted to persons over the age of 18 who were adopted from abroad to Sweden before the age of 18 by someone residing in Sweden. The contribution may be paid to persons who were adopted through an authorised adoption organisation or through a private or individual adoption. Contributions for return travel shall be granted to persons who have been adopted in accordance with a decision by a Swedish court or whose foreign adoption decision has been approved in Sweden in accordance with the Act (1997:191) on Sweden's accession to the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, the Act (2018:1289) on Adoption in International Situations, the Act (1971:796) on International Legal Relations concerning Adoption or the Act (1904:26 s.1) on Certain International Legal Relations concerning Marriage and Guardianship. Contributions for return travel shall not be granted to persons who have been adopted in another Nordic country or who have been adopted in the adoptive parents' country of residence at the time. Applicants must be able to present a copy of the adoption decision or another document proving the adoption (in the same way as when applying for an adoption grant). As the purpose of the grant is to enable adopted persons to search for their origins, persons who have been adopted by a relative or by a parent's spouse or cohabiting partner are not entitled to a grant for searching for their origins.

Contributions towards return travel shall be paid in arrears against proof of expenditure. The disadvantage of payment in arrears is that the applicant must pay the money themselves until the trip is completed. However, advance payment places considerably greater demands on both assessment and

follow-up and risk of extensive administrative handling of recovery claims.

The maximum amount of the grant may only be paid once per adopted person, but it must be possible to apply for it at any time after the person has reached the age of 18. In order for the return travel grant to be paid, the application for the grant must be made within one year of the return journey being completed. The Swedish Social Insurance Agency's decision may be appealed to a general administrative court (Chapter 113, Section 10 of the Social Insurance Code).

The Swedish Social Insurance Agency may issue further regulations on the implementation of the return travel grant in accordance with Section 3 of the Ordinance (1998:562) containing certain authorisations for the Swedish Social Insurance Agency.

## **9.13 State grants to organisations that assist adopted persons in tracing their origins**

**The investigator's assessment:** There is a great deal of knowledge and practical experience regarding origin searches within organisations and networks for adoptees, adoption organisations and individuals. Their cooperation with various actors in the countries of origin is often crucial in order to find birth families and enable reunions. This expertise must be utilised. As a complement to the resource centre's activities in the area of origin searches, the state should also finance, regulate and in other ways contribute to the development of activities that assist adoptees with origin searches. The establishment of such activities should take place in stages and begin with a pilot project.

**The investigator's proposal:** The government should decide on a regulation on state subsidies for a pilot project with organisations that assist adopted persons with tracing their origins.

The MFoF shall be the authority responsible for decisions on grants and shall be tasked by the government with coordinating and evaluating the pilot project.

### **9.13.1 The knowledge about searching for origins that exists within civil society must be utilised.**

We have met many different actors within civil society who assist adopted persons with their search for their origins, both in Sweden and in various countries of origin. There is broad consensus that the state needs to take primary responsibility for helping and supporting adopted persons with their search for their origins, but also that the knowledge and experience available in organisations, networks and among individuals must be utilised. My view is that there is a great deal of knowledge and practical experience regarding searches for origins within organisations and networks for adoptees and adoption organisations.

in Sweden and that their cooperation with various actors in the countries of origin is often crucial in finding birth families and enabling reunions. For example, Chileadoption.se works closely with the Chilean non-profit organisation Hijos y Madres del Silencio, and AFO has a network of contacts that can assist in searching for origins in other countries. AC also has extensive experience in supporting adoptees in their search for their origins and has established contacts in many countries. AC has also expressed to MFoF and the Ministry of Social Affairs that it believes that state subsidies should be available to adoption organisations for their PAS work.<sup>116</sup> I believe that the expertise that exists within civil society must be utilised and that the state should finance, regulate and otherwise contribute to the development and optimal functioning of activities related to origin searches for adoptees.

### **There are several examples of government subsidies to organisations that provide support and assistance to individuals**

There are several examples of government subsidies to organisations that provide support and assistance to individuals. One example is the so-called anti-discrimination agencies run by non-profit organisations, but with subsidies from the state through the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society.<sup>117</sup> The agencies offer free legal advice and training to companies, associations, municipalities and regions. The agencies

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<sup>116</sup> AC. *Application for state subsidy for 2023 and request for the subsidy SFS 2015:980 to be reviewed*. . 13 January 2023.

<sup>117</sup> Regulation (2002:989) on state support for activities that prevent and combat discrimination.

also often engage in opinion-forming work. They work under a confidentiality agreement and are not subject to the principle of public access to official records. They also collaborate with the Discrimination Ombudsman. In all cases, the main bodies responsible for these activities are non-profit, non-governmental organisations. (118) On 1 April 2025, Regulation (2025:119) on pilot projects with independent children's ombudsmen came into force. The pilot project with independent children's ombudsmen from civil society organisations aims to provide support to children in contact with authorities and courts in order to strengthen the child's voice and participation in these contacts. The independent children's ombudsman should also be able to help the child obtain information about the rules and rights that apply and to which the child is entitled in different situations. (119)

### **9.13.2 The state shall contribute to the establishment of activities within civil society organisations that offer support in searching for origins**

#### **A pilot project with organisations that offer support in searching for origins to adopted persons**

I believe that the state should contribute to the establishment of activities within civil society organisations that offer support in searching for origins. The establishment of such activities should take place in stages and begin with a pilot project. The purpose of the pilot project is to test the activity on a smaller scale so that it can then be followed up and evaluated. The government should decide on a regulation on state subsidies for pilot projects with organisations that assist adopted persons in tracing their origins. The MFoF is the appropriate state authority to decide on and pay out state subsidies in accordance with the proposed regulation. The MFoF is currently responsible for state subsidies to authorised adoption associations and national organisations for adoptees. The activities should complement the support for tracing origins provided by the resource centre. The organisations that receive state subsidies can provide more concrete and practical support than the more general support that the resource centre can provide. The organisations shall be able to assist with

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<sup>118</sup> SOU 2023:40 *Improved opportunities for children to compete for their own welfare in accordance with the child's best interests* ventzon p. 517 ff.

<sup>119</sup><https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2025/02/oberoende-barmombud-ska-ge-stod-till-barn-i-utsatta-situationer/>. Retrieved 2025-04-07.

explain the information in adoption documents both in Sweden and in the country of origin, contact individual actors and organisations in the country of origin, provide advice and support in the search process and prior to a return trip, and prepare the first contact in connection with a reunion. It is important that organisations receiving state grants coordinate with the national resource centre

regarding the division of responsibilities. It should be free of charge for adoptees to receive support in searching for their origins from the organisations participating in the pilot project.

I believe that the pilot project with civil society organisations offering support in searching for origins should be aimed at persons over the age of 18. Searching for one's origins is a process that can evoke strong feelings and reactions, and it is therefore important that such a process ensures that the child is not harmed and that the child has access to the protection and support they need. I therefore do not consider it appropriate for the pilot project to include children.

However, the question of whether children should be included in the activities should be included

in the assessment of an extension and expansion of the activities. I have chosen to submit a proposal for a state subsidy regulation that regulates the overall purpose of the subsidy, what an organisation origin search activities should do, and how grants are paid out. It is proposed that the MFoF be given the right to issue regulations regarding the requirements that can be imposed on civil society organisations in order to receive the state grant. This may include specifying in more detail the quality and competence requirements that are to be imposed and how the privacy of individuals can be ensured. It may also be necessary to specify in more detail what information the authority needs in the form of reports and documentation in order to be able to pay out funds and to evaluate and coordinate the pilot project. The MFoF may provide further guidance in other documents if deemed appropriate by the authority.

The regulation is proposed to enter into force on 1 September 2026 and will be applied for the first time in relation to state subsidies for 2027.

## Conditions for and financing of the state subsidy

In accordance with the general conditions for grants to civil society organisations<sup>120</sup>, activities related to tracing origins must be carried out by non-profit associations or foundations. Grants may be awarded to established organisations that have at least two years' experience of providing some form of support to adopted persons and their families.

A non-profit association or foundation that has received a state grant under the regulation may be required to repay the grant if, for example the organisation has provided incorrect information or in some other way caused the grant to be paid incorrectly or in excess, if the grant has not been used, in whole or in part, for the purposes for which it was granted, or if the required report has not been submitted. The responsible authority shall decide to reclaim the grant in whole or in part if the recipient is liable for repayment. If there are special reasons for doing so, the authority may waive the recovery in whole or in part.

According to the government's proposal on civil society policy, financial support for associations should be provided in the form of organisational grants, activity grants, project grants and assignment fees. I believe that an activity grant is the most appropriate form of support for the proposed activity. Activity grants should be chosen when the aim is to support a civil society organisation in its role of providing services to both its members and the general public. This form of grant also enables the state to set clear requirements for consideration. The achievement of objectives shall be assessed on the basis of the organisations' consideration, which means that performance management should be applied in a similar way to other state activities.

The financing of activities involving origin tracing needs to be long-term in order to establish stable activities that can maintain high quality over time. I therefore propose that decisions on state subsidies should be made for three years, but that the subsidy should be paid annually and subject to the availability of funds. A prerequisite for this is that the Riksdag decides on a so-called order authorisation, which sometimes occurs for appropriations that are allocated in whole or in part

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<sup>120</sup> Prop. 2009/10:55, p. 148.

<sup>121</sup> Prop. 2009/10:55 p.141 f.

to civil society organisations with the aim of creating stability and long-term sustainability.<sup>122</sup>

### **The organisations' other work**

An association or foundation that receives grants to conduct activities related to tracing origins shall have the opportunity to conduct other activities in parallel with these activities, such as opinion-forming and advocacy work and educational initiatives. However, the state grant that the organisation receives for activities related to tracing origins shall not be used for these purposes.

### **Government assignment to MFoF to coordinate, develop and follow up on the pilot project**

I propose that MFoF be tasked with coordinating, following up and evaluating the implementation of a pilot project with organisations that assist adopted persons with tracing their origins. The assignment may specify the details of the assignment's implementation and objectives. The actual duration of the pilot project, i.e. the period during which civil society organisations offer the service, should be three years. This is to ensure that the project runs for a sufficiently long period to allow for proper follow-up and evaluation. The assignment to MFoF should include compiling the results of the government assignment. The assignment to MFoF should include compiling the results of the government assignment. No later than one year before the end of the three-year operational trial period, MFoF should submit an initial interim report to the government. This includes submitting proposals on whether and how the trial activities can be expanded in an extended trial period or whether and how they can be converted into permanent activities.

At least two different non-profit associations or foundations should be granted subsidies under the regulation. This is to ensure a certain breadth and dynamism in the trial, which is considered to provide greater opportunities for important experiences and conclusions ahead of an extension and expansion of the activity. The MFoF should issue a broad call for applications for the relevant government grant and participation in the trial.

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<sup>122</sup> SOU 2023:40, p. 512.

In implementing the pilot project, the MFoF should provide relevant and adequate support to the organisations that are granted funding under the Regulation. The MFoF should also seek the views and wishes of the organisations regarding the support they need and how the pilot project should be designed and monitored. The MFoF should also be responsible for developing and implementing introductory and further training for organisations conducting pilot projects with support for adoptees in their search for their origins. The training initiatives may, for example, concern guidance for people who work with assisting individuals in their search for their origins and ethical dilemmas.

## **9.14 Establishment of a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues**

**The investigator's assessment:** A national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues must have a high level of expertise, accessibility and trust. An important part of the centre's mission is to offer direct support to individuals as well as knowledge support to individuals and professionals. This places demands on where a resource centre should be located, both organisationally and geographically. The resource centre should be located at an authority whose basic mission provides the conditions for fulfilling the resource centre's mission to provide direct support to individuals and knowledge support to individuals and professionals. Of the three alternatives that have been considered (the Public Health Agency, MFoF and the National Board of Health and Welfare), MFoF is considered to be the most suitable authority to implement and carry out the mission of a resource centre.

**The investigator's proposal:** The national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues should be placed at MFoF, as a new unit located in Stockholm. Such a solution would enable the resource centre to offer both physical and digital direct support with high availability and a high level of adoption-specific expertise. In order to strengthen the target group's participation in the resource centre's activities, an advisory body shall be linked to the resource centre.

### **9.14.1 The choice of location is important**

In our interviews and focus groups, it was emphasised that a resource centre should be located where it lends legitimacy to the activity. This can be achieved by locating the centre in connection with an existing government agency that can perform the task well and enjoys the trust of the target groups, and by ensuring that the centre is independent of the adoption organisations. One message from the expert group is that knowledge dissemination needs to be linked to existing government structures for knowledge management.

### **9.14.2 Competence centres are located at various operations and host organisations**

We have commissioned a survey of a number of existing competence centres, how they are organised and where they are located.<sup>123</sup> The survey shows that there are advantages to locating a resource centre at an existing organisation, not least for reasons of resources and efficiency. In most cases, competence centres are relatively small operations where it is not justified to build up their own administration and support functions. By being located at an existing host organisation, the centre has the opportunity to utilise the organisation's administrative resources as well as existing knowledge and expertise.

The survey shows that existing competence centres are located at different host organisations, depending on the centre's focus and mission. Some are located at universities and have links to clinical operations at a hospital or in a region.

This applies, for example, to the National Centre for Women's Safety (NCK) at Uppsala University and Region Uppsala, and the National Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (NASP) at Karolinska Institutet and Region Stockholm. Others are only linked to a region, such as the National Centre for Relatives (NKA), which is established at Region Kalmar, and the Västra Götaland Region's Competence Centre on Violence in Close Relationships (VKV) at Region Västra Götaland. There are also centres that are only linked to a university, such as Barnafriid, BARNAF, at Linköping University. Several centres are located at government agencies, such as

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<sup>123</sup> Government. *List of national competence centres in Sweden*, 30 January 2024.

the National Competence Centre for Elderly Care (NKÄ), which is located at the National Board of Health and Welfare, and the National Centre against Honour-Related Violence and Oppression (NCH), which is located at the County Administrative Board of Östergötland but is to be transferred to the Gender Equality Authority. There are also examples of independent centres, such as the Swedish Dementia Centre (SDC).

### **9.14.3 Advantages and disadvantages of different locations**

The survey, our interviews with various stakeholders and the views of our expert group and reference group show that there are advantages and disadvantages to different locations for a resource centre.

A location at a university or regional authority, such as NCK and NASP, has the advantage of enabling the centre to conduct and participate in research (particularly clinical research) and education. This location can provide greater freedom and a less hierarchical administration than other types of government agencies. A location at a university also provides legitimacy and credibility. A disadvantage of a region as the host authority is that the region is politically controlled and influenced by politics and its priorities. Even a location at a university can make prioritisation and control difficult, as universities are independent. According to reports, there are also limitations on how a region can disseminate knowledge and support to other regions, which can limit the accessibility of a resource centre.

Location at an authority other than a university has the advantage of providing access to knowledge and data and good support for the centre's mission. It also provides legitimacy and stable governance and the opportunity to raise issues relating to the centre's activities with the government. A disadvantage is that the host organisation owns the mission and influences how the centre can carry out its mission. Placement at a large authority may mean that it takes longer to push through and implement various issues. The disadvantages of placement at a county administrative board are that the authority handles a large number of issues in its activities and has no mission in relation to healthcare, which makes it difficult for the authority to govern in this area.

An independent organisation has the advantage of being more agile than, for example, a larger authority. A disadvantage is that it can be difficult for an independent centre to make its voice heard and be accepted by neighbouring actors.

Ultimately, it is the centre's area of expertise, focus and mission that must be decisive in the choice of location. What is the resource centre's main mission? Where does the focus of the mission lie? Are there actors with existing expertise in the area who can contribute to the resource centre? Where are the best conditions for creating long-term sustainability and accessibility? Which location gives legitimacy to a resource centre? These are questions that must be answered in order to determine the most suitable location.

#### **9.14.4 A resource centre should be located at a government agency**

The main focus of the mission of a national resource centre for adoptees and adoption issues is to offer direct support to individuals and knowledge support to individuals and professionals who encounter adoptees in their work. The centre should not conduct own research, and especially not clinical research. My assessment is therefore that a location at a university or regional authority is not appropriate. A location at a government agency that is governed in the usual manner is more in line with the centre's mission and focus as described above. Such a solution provides the conditions for stable operations and governance, and ensures that the resource centre's issues are followed up by the government and can be brought to the government's attention.

Based on the above, a resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues should be located at a government agency but not at a university. In my opinion, this provides the best conditions for creating long-term stability and legitimacy for the resource centre.

#### **9.14.5 Three alternatives for the location of a resource centre**

We have considered three alternatives for the location of a resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues: the Public Health Agency of Sweden, MFoF and the National Board of Health and Welfare. The choice of these authorities is based on

my assessment that they have core missions in areas relevant to the resource centre.

In order to analyse the conditions for placing a resource centre at one of the authorities, we have asked the authorities to answer a number of questions. These questions concern the conditions for taking on a resource centre assignment, the authority's competence in the area, whether the authority has experience of similar assignments, where a resource centre could be located within the authority, the advantages and disadvantages of placing a resource centre at the authority, and the authority's position on a resource centre assignment. The authorities responded to the questions in writing, and we then followed up on their responses at a meeting with representatives from each authority. The exception is the Public Health Agency, where we assessed that the written response was sufficient to understand the authority's position on and conditions for a possible assignment. Below, we report on what emerged from our contacts with the three authorities.

### **The Public Health Agency**

The Public Health Agency works to promote good and equal health throughout the population, focusing in particular on groups at greatest risk of ill health. The agency has no competence to deal with issues relating to individuals and does not work specifically with adoption issues in its activities. The only area that has a connection to adoption issues is the agency's work relating to the youngest children (0–2 years), where the agency develops knowledge about how society can provide the best possible support for equal health, and where adoption may be a circumstance that is discussed instead of foster care. The agency also works with knowledge support for children and young people, but this generally concerns issues relating to various forms of vulnerability and what affects or promotes children's health and development, particularly at the societal and group level.

One advantage that the authority highlights in placing a resource centre at the Public Health Agency is that it is a large authority with experience in developing and disseminating knowledge support, follow-up and analysis, producing statistics, coordinating and distributing

state subsidies. The disadvantage is that the agency lacks specific expertise in adoption issues and directly related issues, as well as in handling cases involving individuals. The competence centre will therefore need to be built up from scratch and will lack a clear link to the agency's other activities.

The Public Health Agency's overall assessment is that a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues should not be placed within the agency. There are other agencies that work more closely with the issues related to the resource centre and where the advantages and synergies of a resource centre would be clearer and greater.<sup>124</sup>

## MFoF

According to its instructions, MFoF shall conduct and promote knowledge-based work and be responsible for knowledge dissemination within parenting support, family counselling and family law covered by municipal social services. This work includes the development of regulations, general advice, knowledge support and tools. MFoF is the central authority under the 1993 Hague Convention and is responsible, among other things, for monitoring international developments in international adoptions. Since 2020, MFoF has been providing support for origin searches and adoption-specific counselling, and is the national contact point for issues relating to irregularities in international adoptions. MFoF considers that a resource centre is in line with the agency's mission and can be seen as a reinforcement and further development of what the agency already knows and does.

The advantages that MFoF highlights in placing a resource centre at the agency are that it would provide accessible, uniform and coordinated support to adoptees and their families.

MFoF is an established player nationally and internationally and, based on its existing mission, can continue to develop expertise and support for adoptees, adoptive parents and the profession. MFoF also has experience of working with various channels to disseminate knowledge, such as webinars, podcasts,

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<sup>124</sup> The Public Health Agency of Sweden's response to questions regarding a national resource centre for issues relating to adoptees and adoption, 11 February 2025.

website and through writings and publications. According to the agency, the disadvantage of placing a resource centre at MFoF is that there are individuals who do not trust the agency because it has historically been responsible for the authorisation and supervision of international adoptions. MFoF does not govern healthcare, which, according to the agency, may be a limitation but is not an obstacle to disseminating knowledge to the healthcare sector.

The MFoF considers that the experience it has built up in recent years through its work on origin searches, counselling and as a national contact point for irregularities, together with its role as a central authority and its expertise in knowledge dissemination, makes it well suited to the task of a national resource centre. The MFoF considers that the agency is very well placed to fulfil a role as a resource centre and that the department for international adoptions within the MFoF could become part of a new resource centre. However, the MFoF sees a need to strengthen the agency's expertise in order to deliver better results in all of its various assignments.

(<sup>125</sup>)

### **National Board of Health and Welfare**

The National Board of Health and Welfare's instructions do not specify any particular tasks relating to adoption issues, but there are related issues. For example, the agency provides support in matters concerning national adoptions handled by social services. The activity at the National Board of Health and Welfare that most closely resembles the proposed resource centre for adoption issues is the National Board of Health and Welfare's National Competence Centre for Elderly Care (NKÄ). However, NKÄ does not offer support to individuals.

With regard to the tasks of a resource centre, the authority sees no problem in offering skills enhancement initiatives for professionals who encounter adoptees in their daily work, promoting research in the field, offering forums and exchanges of experience, or otherwise disseminating information and knowledge about adoption issues. On the other hand, the authority considers it more

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<sup>125</sup> MFoF, Written response to the Adoption Commission's questions regarding a national resource centre for issues relating to adoptees and adoption, 13 February 2025; Meeting with MFoF on 24 February 2025.

unclear whether it can offer support to individuals through counselling and assistance in searching for their origins. According to the Administrative Procedure Act, a government agency shall provide individuals with such assistance that they can safeguard their interests. This means that the agency cannot assist individuals in a case. On the contrary, the information provided to individuals must be factual and impartial.

As a government agency, the National Board of Health and Welfare cannot be given a role in which it assists and takes a position in individual cases or issues relating to adoption. If it is proposed that a centre be established at the National Board of Health and Welfare, the centre's tasks should be clarified so that they are compatible with the agency's role and with the Administrative Procedure Act. At our meeting with the National Board of Health and Welfare, it was stated that if the National Board of Health and Welfare is to be given a mandate to provide support to individuals, a change in the law is required; a mandate in the authority's instructions is not sufficient. However, the authority risks ending up in a dual role if it has both a knowledge-sharing mandate, where the authority must be perceived as impartial, and at the same time provides individual support. Today, the National Board of Health and Welfare is very careful to distinguish between these two roles, and there may be a risk of damage to the authority's credibility.

The authority is considering whether it is appropriate for it to be given a resource centre mandate on this basis.

One advantage of placing a resource centre at the National Board of Health and Welfare is that the authority will have overall responsibility for international and national adoptions. The needs of adoptees can be integrated into the authority's issues. The National Board of Health and Welfare also has established forms of knowledge management and networks and channels for reaching out to social services and health care, which is particularly important as the National Board of Health and Welfare enjoys a high level of trust within these sectors. The National Board of Health and Welfare also has experience of national centres of expertise and how they should be organised and relate to the authority's organisation and processes. The disadvantages of placing a resource centre at the National Board of Health and Welfare are that the authority lacks or has limited competence for some of the centre's proposed tasks, particularly international adoptions and support for individuals in the form of, among other things, searching for origins. The responsibility for individual support proposed for the centre deviates from the authority's usual tasks. Another disadvantage is that the resource centre would be one of many tasks within the National Board of Health and Welfare, and there is a risk that the issue of adoption would be less prominent and receive less attention than if the centre were to be placed at the National Board of Health and Welfare.

be placed in a smaller authority. However, the National Board of Health and Welfare has extensive experience of being responsible for and coordinating many different issues, and the authority believes that the resource centre model counteracts such a risk by making the centre clearly organised both internally and externally.

If a competence centre were to be established at the National Board of Health and Welfare, this would mean that the authority would need to develop expertise in the area. Some of the tasks for the proposed centre are currently performed, according to instructions or government decisions, by the Ministry of Finance, and it is therefore important to clarify the division of responsibilities between the authorities.

If a resource centre for adoption issues were to be established at the National Board of Health and Welfare, it would probably be placed as a unit within one of the agency's departments. The resource centre would be in line with the organisation and governance of the agency in general, thus creating clarity internally but above all externally.

The National Board of Health and Welfare's assessment is that the assignment is largely compatible with the authority's basic mission, except when it comes to direct support. The assignment needs to be regulated in the authority's instructions, and the tasks relating to support for individuals need to be clarified so that they are compatible with the authority's role and with the Administrative Procedure Act.

The authority needs to be provided with resources to be able to carry out such an assignment.<sup>126</sup>

### **Conditions and considerations for placing a resource centre at MFoF or the National Board of Health and Welfare**

Based on the responses we have received from the authorities, my conclusion is that the choice of location for a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues is between the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and the National Board of Health and Welfare. I do not consider it appropriate to proceed with the Public Health Agency as an alternative.

As described earlier in this chapter, a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues should be able to meet the support needs of adopted persons, particularly with regard to counselling, support in searching for origins and support in cases of suspected irregularities. It is therefore important to be able to offer direct support.

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<sup>126</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare, Written response to the Adoption Commission's questions regarding a national resource centre for issues concerning adoptees and adoption, 17 February 2025; Meeting with the National Board of Health and Welfare on 24 February 2025.

can be done in various ways, for example by allowing external providers to offer the support. This is currently the case for telephone support, and parts of the support for tracing origins should also, as I propose, be offered by actors other than the resource centre. Regardless of this, there will be a need for a national resource centre to be able to guide individuals in various matters, i.e. to provide direct support. This is one of several important starting points for the location of a resource centre.

When it comes to support for individuals, MFoF already offers such support in the form of counselling and origin searches. The agency has built up expertise and developed materials and guidelines to assist with various types of questions and cases concerning origin searches. Based on its role as the central authority for international adoption issues, the agency has established contacts with other central authorities. The MFoF also has knowledge of adoption activities over time, which is important for developing support for origin searches, but also for supporting individuals in cases of suspected irregularities in adoptions. The MFoF's current contact point assignment also contributes to building expertise in this area. The National Board of Health and Welfare does not currently have the same knowledge and expertise. The National Board of Health and Welfare also states that it is not appropriate for them to be given a mandate to offer direct support to individuals, as this conflicts with the authority's knowledge dissemination mandate, where the authority must be perceived as impartial. The National Board of Health and Welfare emphasises that they are very careful to distinguish between these two areas and see a risk of damage to the authority's credibility with such a mandate. A central part of a resource centre's activities would thus risk being lost, or having to be offered exclusively through external actors. However, my assessment is that a national resource centre cannot completely relinquish its role of offering direct support to individuals. The MFoF has also discussed the boundaries for providing direct support and has concluded that it is possible to provide information to individuals and refer them on in the same way that the authority does today. However, the MFoF needs to consider where the boundary should be drawn and how this relates to the practices of other authorities.

When it comes to the task of a resource centre providing knowledge support to professionals, compiling research and producing guidelines, this is a good fit for both the MFoF and the National Board of Health and Welfare, as both authorities have this type of task and role in other

areas. It is particularly close to the National Board of Health and Welfare's existing mission and role. A resource centre located at the National Board of Health and Welfare would be well placed to provide knowledge support to social services and health care. However, MFoF has unique expertise in the field of international adoption, which is important in order to be able to maintain an overview of the knowledge that exists and the knowledge and research that is needed within the framework of a resource centre. The MFoF also already works with knowledge support for professionals in areas such as parenting support.

With regard to the resource centre's task of providing forums and meeting places, MFoF has the advantage of already having established channels and working methods for reaching out to various target groups in the field of adoption, for example through podcasts, webinars and seminars.

Another important factor in the location of a resource centre is the size and governance of the host authority. MFoF is a small authority, and a resource centre assignment would be an important addition to the authority. This suggests that the assignment will be prioritised and given considerable focus. The National Board of Health and Welfare itself points out that an assignment within international adoptions will be one of a large number of assignments for the authority.

authority. There is a risk that the issue will "disappear" within the authority as a whole. However, the National Board of Health and Welfare emphasises that the resource centre format helps to counteract this risk. It gives the assignment greater clarity both internally and externally.

As I have noted, there is a great need for the support that a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues can offer. This need has existed for a long time, and it is only in recent years that the government has decided to offer support through the MFoF. My assessment is therefore that it is important that the establishment of a national resource centre is not delayed. This argues in favour of placing a resource centre at an authority where there is already established expertise in the field of international adoption. The MFoF has this expertise. The MFoF also has experience of offering direct support to individuals and working with knowledge-supporting initiatives.

### Proposal to incorporate MFoF into the National Board of Health and Welfare

The inquiry into the review of the tasks and organisation of smaller authorities submitted its final report in February 2025.<sup>127</sup> The inquiry's task was to analyse the activities, tasks and organisation of smaller authorities and to submit proposals on which authorities or parts of authorities' activities should be phased out, and to which authority or authorities any remaining tasks should be transferred.

The inquiry proposes that all of the MFoF's tasks relating to parenting support, family counselling, family law and international adoptions be transferred to the National Board of Health and Welfare. According to the inquiry, it is particularly important that the MFoF's current tasks relating to international adoptions be transferred to the National Board of Health and Welfare. It is also very important to ensure continuity in terms of capacity and quality in several of the MFoF's tasks, including international adoptions. The inquiry does not propose any change in the location of the tasks to be transferred to the National Board of Health and Welfare. According to the inquiry, it is reasonable for the current activities to continue to be carried out in Skellefteå for the time being. According to the report, integration is expected to provide a better overall view and better opportunities for more coordinated and effective work with, for example, international adoptions. It may also yield administrative gains. One risk with consolidation is that issues relating to international adoptions may receive less attention or be given lower priority, and that the MFoF's specialist expertise in this area may be weakened within a larger authority. According to the report, it is possible to manage and limit such risks in an appropriate manner.

In dialogue with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, we have been advised to base our analyses and proposals on the existing agency structure, i.e. we analyse and assess the agencies based on their current tasks and roles. However, I note that my proposals work well regardless of what happens in this matter.

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<sup>127</sup> SOU 2025:13 *An impact assessment of the proposed authority – analysis and proposals*, pp. 33 and 354 ff.

**9.14.6 A resource centre shall be established as a separate unit within MFoF, located in Stockholm.****Important measures for the establishment within the MFoF**

Based on the above considerations, my proposal is that the MFoF be given the task of establishing a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues, and that the resource centre be located at the MFoF but as a separate unit in Stockholm. The centre's mission shall be set out in the MFoF's instructions and financed by government grants via the MFoF's letter of regulation. The resource centre shall be established on 1 September 2026.

However, a prerequisite for MFoF being given this role and responsibility is that the resource centre assignment does not merely become a continuation of the agency's current support assignment. The disadvantages and objections to placing a resource centre at MFoF must be addressed, not least with regard to the criticism levelled at MFoF's existing support and lack of accessibility. As described in previous sections, the resource centre should offer high-quality, competent support with a high level of accessibility. The centre must have a high degree of legitimacy. My assessment is that several measures are required to achieve this.

It cannot be ignored that MFoF does not currently enjoy the full confidence of its target group. Although many who have used MFoF's support are satisfied, there are also those who are dissatisfied and who express distrust of the authority. This applies in particular to adoptive parents' associations. Regardless of how many people distrust MFoF's capacity to manage a resource centre, there is a risk that this will affect the legitimacy of the resource centre, which would be very unfortunate.

In order for a national resource centre to gain the legitimacy it needs, I therefore believe that a fresh start is needed when establishing a resource centre. An important part of this fresh start is to make it clear that the resource centre is separate from the handling of international adoption cases, that it is independent of the adoption organisations, and that it is organisationally and physically separate from the existing activities at the MFoF.

As I have emphasised, I consider it important that a resource centre is highly accessible and can offer direct support. It is not enough

with contact via email, telephone or digital meetings, as is the case today. I believe that support will be more effective and better meet existing needs if it also includes the possibility of direct contact, for example for exchanges of experience and meeting places, as well as support in searching for origins. This argues against a location in Skellefteå. A centre located in Stockholm is geographically more accessible than a centre located in Skellefteå and can therefore reach more people within a larger surrounding area. For most individuals, it also takes longer and costs more to travel to Skellefteå than to Stockholm. My proposal is therefore, as stated above, that the national resource centre be established as a separate unit within the MFoF, located in Stockholm. This will make it possible to create the highly accessible centre that is in demand. I am aware that this is a sensitive issue. The agency moved to Skellefteå in 2018 and has since worked hard to build up new expertise within the agency. There is a risk that there will be a new loss of expertise in the short term, but I believe that this can be avoided by establishing the new unit in good time and recruiting staff before the resource centre is due to start operating on 1 September 2026. I therefore believe that the benefits of locating the centre in Stockholm, in the form of increased accessibility, broader expertise and the opportunity for a fresh start, they weigh up the potential risks and disadvantages that this may entail.

Another important issue is the expertise of the resource centre. The expertise currently available at the international adoption department at MFoF is largely tailored to the agency's mandate to authorise and supervise international adoption activities. Approximately half of the employees work with tasks that will be included in the resource centre's mandate. A resource centre therefore needs to recruit new expertise based on the mandate that the resource centre will have. A location in Stockholm may facilitate the recruitment of suitable personnel. According to my proposals, expertise in origin tracing can also be broadened, for example by utilising the expertise of individual adoptees, adoptee associations and adoption organisations in various ways. The introduction of an advisory body with representation from researchers and individuals with different experiences will also add expertise.

It is clear that MFoF wants a mandate as a national resource centre, which is gratifying and provides good conditions for the mandate to be prioritised and given focus within the authority. However, the assignment requires an awareness that the activities at the resource centre are of a different nature than the assignment that the authority has today and that this will place great demands on the authority. The assignment also requires that the authority and the resource centre be given sufficient resources.

### **Competence and staffing of the resource centre**

My assessment is that a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues requires twelve full-time employees. The resource centre shall have a manager and employees who are recruited based on the specific competence requirements necessary to fulfil the assignment.

In addition, there is the counselling service and the organisations that receive government grants to help with origin searches.

In addition to a manager for the resource centre, there should be an employee who coordinates the helpline and develops the support together with the external providers offering the helpline, corresponding to how the National Social Appeals Board coordinates PAS support. One employee should work with legal support and otherwise contribute legal expertise within the resource centre. Five people will work on building up and offering support for origin searches and support in cases of suspected irregularities. Of these, two positions will be flexible and filled through fixed-term project appointments in order to make more flexible use of relevant expertise based on the specific competence needs of the resource centre over time. This could advantageously be several part-time positions or shorter project appointments in order to quickly build up knowledge about origin searches in different countries. Two people will work with knowledge support for professionals and to stimulate and take care of research. Two full-time equivalents will work with communication, finance and IT-related issues concerning the resource centre.

The Children's Ombudsman has stated that it is important for the resource centre to have expertise in children's specific circumstances and needs, as well as knowledge and experience of talking to children.

**An advisory body will be linked to the resource centre**

An advisory body shall be linked to the resource centre. The council shall include individuals, researchers and others with relevant expertise for the centre's activities and provide an opportunity for different experiences and perspectives to meet. The MFoF shall appoint the members of the council. The council has an important role in involving the target group in the activities and in strengthening the resource centre's knowledge and competence base. If there is a need to develop the research connection in the activities, a special research council may be linked to the resource centre. The advisory body may then be converted into a user council.

# 10 Impact assessment, costs and financing proposals

## 10.1 The assignment

According to our directives, the investigator shall comprehensively and thoroughly examine the consequences of the proposals submitted. In addition to the provisions of Sections 14–15a of the Committee Ordinance (1998:1474), the investigator shall specifically analyse the significance of the proposals for the authorised associations. If the proposals are expected to lead to increased public expenditure, the investigator shall propose how this is to be financed. If a proposal is submitted that changes or extends the responsibilities or powers of an authority, the costs of this shall be reported. If the proposals affect local self-government, the consequences and the specific considerations that justify the proposals shall be reported separately (see Chapter 14, Section 3 of the Instrument of Government). The impact analysis regarding gender equality shall refer to conditions in both the countries of origin and in Sweden, to the extent that they are affected by the inquiry's report. An account of the consequences of the proposals and their compatibility with Sweden's international human rights commitments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1993 Hague Convention, shall be provided.

The inquiry was convened in October 2021 and shall base its impact assessment on the provisions set out in Sections 6 and 7 of the repealed Ordinance (2007:1244) on impact assessments in connection with rule-making.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (2024:183) on impact assessments Transitional provisions.

## 10.2 Consequences for children and children's rights

Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that in all actions concerning children, consideration must be given to the best interests of the child. The principle of the best interests of the child is an approach to decision-making processes. Analyses therefore need to be carried out on an ongoing basis during the course of the work as an integral part of the process of developing proposals for measures.<sup>2</sup> We have continuously analysed the best interests of the child in our investigative work.

### 10.2.1 The proposal to phase out international adoption services

The proposal to phase out international adoption services has a significant impact on children's living conditions, which means that we have produced a detailed description and analysis of the consequences and effects from a child rights perspective. In this assessment, we have based our work on the Children's Ombudsman's methodological support for how a structured assessment of the best interests of the child can be made. Below is a brief summary of the child impact analysis.

Even such a drastic measure as international adoption can be the best care solution for an individual child if the adoption is carried out exclusively with the child's needs in mind and with respect for the rights of the child and the parents. However, international adoption cannot be viewed solely from a micro perspective. At the systemic level, the practice of placing children for adoption is problematic because it is based on a demand for children. The combination of demand for children from recipient countries and strong economic interests can both create an incentive in the countries of origin to place more children for international adoption than is necessary from a child rights perspective, and a risk of child trafficking and other irregularities. These underlying factors mean that there is a high risk of irregularities and that it is not possible to fully guarantee that adoptions always take place in a legal and ethical manner. Swedish authorities do not have the ability or even the right to fully control the processes carried out in other countries. Sweden cannot therefore guarantee that there are no irregularities in the countries with which we cooperate.

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<sup>2</sup> Ds 2022:22 *Better impact assessment*, p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> <https://provningbarnetsbasta.barnombudsmannen.se/>.

Taking into account the risks and consequences that irregularities in international adoptions can lead to, I consider that international adoption mediation is no longer a sustainable solution for protecting the interests of children. Despite the advantages that international adoption can bring for an individual child, my assessment is that the proposal to phase out adoption services will contribute to improving the opportunities for children as a group to have their rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child fulfilled. Research shows that international adoptions inadvertently lead to national solutions in the children's countries of origin being of poorer quality than would be the case if international adoption had not taken place. At the micro level, phasing out international adoption mediation services could mean that children currently living in orphanages in other countries would not be given the opportunity to find a permanent family in Sweden. However, international adoption is no longer the primary option for meeting the care needs of any category of children anywhere in the world. A relatively small group of children would be affected by the phasing out of adoption services. In 2024, 54 children were adopted to Sweden from nine countries, and the forecast for the future is declining.

### **10.2.2 Proposal for stricter rules for international adoption permits**

In a globalised world, there will always be a need for cross-border adoptions in individual cases. An international adoption may be in the best interests of an individual child, taking into account, among other things, the child's right to grow up primarily with their family, which may be relatives (or someone in the extended network) living in a country other than the child's. One consequence of the proposal to phase out international adoption services is that cross-border adoptions will only be possible without the involvement of an adoption organisation, i.e. through what is currently referred to as private adoption. As described in Chapter 8, there are risks in the current process for private adoption, and I therefore propose stricter rules for authorising international adoption. The assessment is that the requirement for a personal relationship between the child and the adopter prior to the adoption reduces the risk of violating the child's right to their identity and knowledge

judgement of their origin under Articles 7 and 8 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The fact that the adopter knows the child before the adoption further strengthens the child's opportunities to maintain contact with their birth parents, siblings and relatives in their home country and to retain their language and culture under Articles 20 and 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

A requirement for a personal relationship also reduces the risk of child trafficking.

The proposal that permission for international adoption should also be granted if the child is related to the adoptive parents' adopted child, i.e. a biological (full or half) sibling of a child who has already been adopted by the applicant, is justified on the basis of the child's right to maintain family relationships. The Convention on the Rights of the Child does not expressly state how the issue of siblings should be handled, but the Convention states that adoption must not result in a child being separated from his or her siblings unless separation is in the best interests of the child. Separating siblings may therefore violate the child's right to maintain family relationships. <sup>(4)</sup>The Committee on the Rights of the Child has stated that the principle of family unity should be taken into account in placements; for example, siblings should not be separated. <sup>(5)</sup>Research shows that sibling relationships have a positive impact on a child's development.

The proposal that the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support (MFoF) should assess both the reliability of the mediation method and whether the adoption is in the best interests of the child, taking all circumstances into account, aims to strengthen legal certainty and ensure that international adoptions only take place if they are in the best interests of the child.

### **10.2.3 The proposal that the assessment of whether the adoption procedure may continue be transferred from the social welfare committees to the MFoF**

As stated in section 8.10.4, it is currently unclear what responsibility the social welfare committees have to ensure that the legal conditions for adoption are met when deciding whether the adoption procedure may continue. At present, the social welfare committees do not, as a rule, carry out any detailed checks of the adoption documents. The proposal that the MFoF should

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<sup>4</sup> J. Tobin (2019), *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A Commentary*, p. 777.

<sup>5</sup> Children's Ombudsman. Swedish translation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 6 Treatment of unaccompanied children and children separated from their parents outside their country of origin (CRC/C/GC/6) p. 40.

Taking over responsibility for deciding on continued consent aims to strengthen control over whether all adoption documents are included in the case and that they are authentic. Such an arrangement would increase the possibility of stopping adoptions that are not deemed to meet the requirements set out in legislation and conventions, including those concerning the identity of children, adoptability, and the application of the principle of subsidiarity. The proposal aims to strengthen legal certainty and ensure that international adoptions only take place if they are in the best interests of the child.

#### **10.2.4 The proposal that the court should reject an application for adoption if the applicant does not have permission from the MFoF**

As stated in section 8.7.3, there is nothing to prevent a person who wishes to adopt a specific child from applying directly to a Swedish court (district court) without first obtaining the social welfare committee's consent to receive the child, the MFoF's permission for private adoption and consent for the adoption procedure to continue. If the applicant applies directly to a Swedish court, it is therefore possible that the child leaves their home country without any assessment having been made of whether the applicants are suitable as adoptive parents or whether adoption is otherwise in the best interests of the child. The applicants are also not required to undergo parental training. The proposal that the court should reject an application for adoption if permission from the MFoF is not granted is intended to ensure that the child's rights are safeguarded in the adoption process. The requirement for permission from the MFoF, and thus also for approval from the social services committee, is intended to provide the court with a thorough basis for assessing whether the adoption is in the best interests of the child. This is particularly important when it comes to moving a child across national borders, with all that this entails in terms of safeguarding the child's interests. The proposal and its consequences for children are described in detail in section 8.10.5.

#### **10.2.5 The proposal to establish a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues**

The proposal to establish a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues will have positive consequences for children.

The proposal in section 9.5 regarding a new counselling service means that, unlike today, the current age limit of 15 will be removed. The resource centre will assess in each individual case what support is appropriate to offer based on the child's maturity. The child's own opinions and wishes are an important starting point for the assessment. The aim is to give more children access to counselling than is currently offered. Counselling also means greater availability from a geographical perspective and that more providers will offer counselling. One of the purposes of having more providers is to reduce the risk of queues forming, as is currently the case. It is particularly important for children and young people that counselling support can be offered as quickly as possible when needed. The proposal increases the possibility for more children and young people to have access to counselling support that meets their needs.

The support in origin searches that MFoF currently offers only covers adopted persons over the age of 18. Since children can access their adoption documents after review by the social services committee, I believe that children should also be offered support from the resource centre in their search for their origins. The resource centre may assess in each individual case what support is appropriate to offer based on the child's maturity. The child's own opinions and wishes are an important starting point in this assessment. The proposal is in line with Article 22 of the 2008 Council of Europe Convention, which stipulates, among other things, that adopted children have the right to access information about their origins from the competent authorities and that appropriate guidance should be given to adopted children who have not reached the age of majority. The need for psychosocial support that may arise in connection with tracing one's origins is provided through the resource centre's counselling service.

The proposal in section 9.8 on individual support for adopted persons who suspect irregularities in their adoption also covers adoptees under the age of 18. This is important, not least because of the obligation under Article 8.2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child that a child who has been unlawfully deprived of part or all of their identity should be given appropriate support and protection with a view to restoring their identity as soon as possible. The resource centre may assess in each individual case what support is appropriate to offer based on the child's maturity. The psychosocial support that may be needed is offered through the resource centre's counselling service.

One young interviewee told us that the most important support for adopted young people would be to feel a sense of community, to be able to see themselves reflected in other adopted people and to take part in

of other people's experiences. My proposal that the national resource centre should pay particular attention to the needs and wishes of children and young people for exchange of experiences and social community aims to meet that need. The goal is for the national resource centre to become a safe place where adopted children and young people can feel a sense of belonging and connection. This can prevent mental ill health in children and young people.

My proposal for knowledge-enhancing support for professionals who encounter internationally adopted persons in their work can improve knowledge about the special needs of adopted children at child health centres, preschools, schools, youth clinics, child and adolescent psychiatric services, primary care and social services. This knowledge, and thus the ability of professionals to identify these needs, is in line with the rights of the child under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For example, Article 6 states that States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child, and Article 24 emphasises the child's right to the highest attainable standard of health and access to health care and rehabilitation, and that States Parties have an obligation to strive to fully realise this right.

## **10.3 Consequences for government agencies**

MFoF is affected by several of the proposals. The proposal to phase out mediation activities means that MFoF's task of authorising and supervising adoption organisations that mediate international adoptions will cease. The mediation activities must be terminated by 31 December 2028 at the latest, and MFoF will be tasked by the government with drawing up a phase-out plan that clearly and transparently describes how the mediation activities will be phased out. The phase-out requires MFoF to prepare and plan for the phase-out. To the extent that MFoF needs to grant authorisation, this will be for the purpose of completing ongoing cases, which involves less work than granting new or extended country authorisation. MFoF will also not need to grant Sweden authorisation. In practice, supervision of brokerage activities will only cover AC and will thus be more limited than before. As the phase-out will take place gradually, the need for staff in this area will gradually decrease until 2028. Our assessment is that four of the five full-time employees

currently working with authorisation and supervision can be phased out gradually based on the phase-out plan proposed by MFoF.

The proposal for stronger state control of international adoption means that the MFoF will grant permission for international adoption (previously referred to as private adoption) of children residing in another country and assess whether the mediation method is reliable. The authority already assesses whether the placement method is reliable, but the proposal adds a new task of also assessing whether the adoption is in the best interests of the child. The MFoF has also proposed this to the government. From 2020 to the present, the MFoF has handled approximately 20-30 cases per year concerning the assessment of whether the placement method for individual adoption is reliable. My assessment is that the number of cases will decrease given that permission may only be granted if there is a personal relationship between the applicant and the child. It will no longer be possible to adopt an unknown child from a country where the applicant has lived, worked or has their origins. However, the new task of assessing the best interests of the child in adoption cases places higher demands on the MFoF's assessment than is currently the case.

The proposal to transfer responsibility for assessing whether the adoption process may continue under Chapter 6, Section 14 of the Social Services Act<sup>6</sup> from social welfare committees to the MFoF entails a new task for the MFoF. The MFoF itself has also proposed this to the government. As I propose that international adoption should only be permitted in cases where there is a close personal relationship between the applicants and the child prior to the adoption, the assessment of the applicant's suitability and eligibility to adopt that specific child will already be carried out in connection with the MFoF's assessment of the adoption permit. The focus of the assessment of continued consent will therefore be primarily on ensuring that all documentation about the child is available and that it is correct.

The proposal to establish a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues at the MFoF means that the authority will be instructed to offer adoption-specific support through the resource centre. The resource centre will be located at a separate unit in Stockholm, which will affect the organisation of the MFoF's activities and place demands on the MFoF in the establishment and setting up of the resource centre. In terms of the tasks relating to the resource centre, the MFoF already has some of these tasks today.

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<sup>6</sup> Chapter 24, Section 5 of the Social Services Act (2025:000), latest version Prop. 2024/25:89.

through the special government assignment on counselling, origin tracing and national contact points, which is to be finalised in February 2027. However, the proposal for a resource centre is considerably more comprehensive and places new demands on the organisation compared to today. It should not be seen merely as an extension or continuation of the support activities currently offered by the authority. It is about establishing enhanced and more accessible counselling support, offering developed and packaged support in origin searches together with external expertise, building up support in cases of suspected irregularities, and developing and working with knowledge dissemination and research in the area. The five full-time employees who currently work with support activities can be transferred to the resource centre. Otherwise, new recruitment will be required.

The Swedish authorities abroad are affected by both the proposal for stronger state control of cross-border adoptions and the proposal for support in tracing origins. According to the proposal in section 8.10.3, the Swedish authorities abroad shall be obliged to assist the MFoF with investigations in cases concerning permits for international adoption. However, they already have this task today, as the MFoF is obliged under Section 6a, third paragraph, of the LIA to consult with the Swedish foreign authority in matters concerning authorisation. The assessment is that this task is already part of the foreign authorities' remit. As I propose that adoption mediation activities should be phased out, there will also be fewer cases in the future. It is also proposed that foreign authorities assist the resource centre in tracing origins. Swedish foreign authorities shall assist the resource centre with up-to-date information on the possibilities for adoptees to trace their origins under the legislation of the country concerned, which authorities and organisations are responsible for which parts of the process, and how they can assist. It is also proposed that Swedish authorities abroad assist with DNA testing in the same way that they assist Swedish social welfare committees in investigations concerning the determination of paternity. The proposals may have some impact on authorities abroad, particularly in countries from which many people have been adopted. The foreign authorities shall assist in producing documentation and material when the resource centre produces new "packages" for origin searches in a country or develops an existing package. The assessment is that this is included in the foreign authority's existing remit. If more people become interested in origin searches

searching for and accessing travel grants may also lead to increased demand for support from individuals. However, the main responsibility for support lies with the resource centre, and the proposal is not based on the foreign authorities having a built-up support system, but rather referring to the resource centre and the support available there. The assessment is therefore that these tasks also fall within the existing remit of the foreign authorities. If it turns out that the foreign authorities in certain countries need to allocate significant additional resources to cope with this task, the Government may need to review the allocation of resources to the foreign authorities in the future.

The National Board of Health and Welfare is affected to some extent by the proposal for knowledge-raising initiatives for professionals who encounter adopted persons in their work. The proposal means, among other things, that the resource centre should use the National Board of Health and Welfare's existing structures for knowledge management to disseminate adoption-specific knowledge within social services and health care. The National Board of Health and Welfare should not develop entirely new knowledge support, regulations, general advice or guidelines for adoption issues, but should only support the resource centre in the development of knowledge support and guide the resource centre in which channels are appropriate to use for the various types of knowledge support. This is considered to be within the scope of the National Board of Health and Welfare's existing mandate regarding state governance with knowledge relating to healthcare and social services.

The National Board of Health and Welfare is responsible, among other things, for knowledge development and knowledge dissemination within its area of activity.<sup>7</sup>

The district courts are not expected to be affected to any great extent by the proposals. The phasing out of mediation activities may possibly lead to fewer adoption cases. The proposal that the court should reject an application for adoption if the applicant does not have a permit for international adoption may also lead to fewer adoption cases.

The Swedish Social Insurance Agency is affected by the proposals in that the agency will be given the task of handling applications and paying travel grants to internationally adopted children. The Swedish Social Insurance Agency already handles the payment of various grants, such as adoption grants to adoptive parents, and therefore has systems and procedures in place to handle this type of case as well. The inflow of cases depends on the amount of funds allocated to travel grants and the level of demand for such grants.

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<sup>7</sup> Regulation (2015:284) with instructions for the National Board of Health and Welfare.

## 10.4 Consequences for authorised associations

The proposal in section 8.10.2 to phase out international adoption mediation means that it will no longer be permitted to mediate children from abroad for adoption in Sweden. This means that adoption organisations that are active must phase out their mediation activities. Barnen Framför Allt (BFA) has already begun phasing out its activities following a decision by the board in autumn 2024. BFA is therefore not affected by the proposal.

Adoptionscentrum (AC) has stated that its placement activities can "in theory" continue as long as there is a need for international adoptions, interest among prospective adoptive parents and countries wishing to cooperate with AC.<sup>8</sup> However, the current situation, with fewer children being placed for adoption in Sweden, means that AC does not receive the income from adoption fees that it needs to maintain its operations. According to MFoF, AC has stated that it is in a difficult financial situation. If AC does not receive any new income, it has sufficient funds to cover just over a year of the organisation's total costs as they stand at present.<sup>9</sup> According to MFoF, there is therefore a risk that AC will need to wind up its placement activities before our proposals come into effect, i.e. before 1 January 2029. This could mean that AC will not be affected by the proposal in practice either.

In addition to its mediation activities, AC currently also provides assistance and support to adoptees and adoptive parents through its Post Adoption Services (PAS). AC may therefore continue to exist as an organisation even after its mediation activities have been phased out. AC has extensive experience of PAS, and it is important that this expertise continues to be utilised. Section 9.13 proposes that the Government adopt a regulation on state subsidies for pilot projects with organisations that assist adopted persons in searching for their origins. AC will thus be able to apply for state subsidies for its work with origin searches and return trips. The regulation is proposed to enter into force on 1 September 2026 and be applied for the first time in relation to state grants for 2027. This means that AC's long experience of international adoption

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<sup>8</sup> AC's response to questions 6–13. Received by the Adoption Commission on 11 February 2025.

<sup>9</sup> MFoF's response to questions from the Adoption Commission, received on 13 February 2025.

activities and contacts with adoption organisations, authorities and other actors in other countries can be utilised.

## **10.5 Consequences for local government autonomy**

The proposal in section 8.10.4 that responsibility for assessing whether the adoption procedure may continue under Chapter 6, Section 14 of the Social Services Act <sup>10</sup>should be transferred from the social welfare committees to the MFoF means that the municipalities will have fewer tasks within international adoption activities. The other proposals are not expected to result in the municipalities having any new or expanded responsibilities beyond what they already have or are required to do today. The proposals therefore do not affect local government autonomy.

## **10.6 Consequences for businesses and the market**

The assessment is that the consequences for businesses and the market mainly affect small businesses, as described below.

### **10.6.1 Consequences for small businesses' working conditions, competitiveness or other conditions in relation to larger companies**

The proposal for future counselling support described in section 9.5 is based on freedom of choice and that counselling support should offer broader and deeper adoption-specific expertise and greater availability than is currently offered. More providers should be given the opportunity to offer counselling support than is currently the case, where a contracted provider offers counselling support. The proposed model does not require a single provider to meet all competence requirements, but opens up for more small providers to contribute part of the competence needed for the overall counselling support. This lowers the threshold for small companies to compete in the market. With more suppliers, the competence within the counselling service as a whole can be both broadened and raised. The proposal for more accessible support also provides opportunities for small suppliers in different parts of the country to offer counselling services. In order to avoid a few large suppliers

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<sup>10</sup> Chapter 24, Section 5 of the Social Services Act (2025:000), latest version Prop. 2024/25:89.

with contracted subcontractors gaining competitive advantages over small providers, specific requirements should be set out in the tender documentation during procurement.

## **10.7 Consequences for employment and public services in different parts of the country**

The various proposals concerning the MFoF's activities will have consequences for employment in different parts of the country. The proposal to phase out the mediation activities will result in reduced staffing requirements at the MFoF. At the same time, there will still be some staffing needs based on the proposal to strengthen state control of international adoption. The assessment is that this will result in a total reduction in staffing needs in Skellefteå of four full-time equivalents. With regard to the national resource centre, the proposal is to establish it as a special unit at the MFoF, located in Stockholm. The argument for this is that a central part of the resource centre's activities is direct support in the search for origins, but also the exchange of experience and forums that require greater geographical accessibility than a centre located in Skellefteå could provide. This means that the resources relating to the tasks to be included in the resource centre's activities, which are currently located in Skellefteå, may need to be moved to Stockholm.

## **10.8 Consequences and compatibility with Sweden's international convention commitments**

The starting point for all considerations and proposals has been Sweden's human rights commitments, particularly with regard to the rights of the child in adoption, see Volume 2, Chapter 2. According to the directives, the starting point for our work shall be the rights of the child in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1993 Hague Convention.

The proposal to discontinue the practice of placing children for adoption in Sweden is consistent with both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1993 Hague Convention. Sweden has no obligation to cooperate with other countries on adoption under these conventions.

The proposal to limit the possibility of international adoption to cases where there is a personal relationship between the child and the applicant prior to the adoption aims to safeguard the rights of the child in accordance with Articles 7, 8, 20 and 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The proposal that permission for international adoption should also be granted if the child is related to the applicant's adopted child, i.e. a biological (full or half) sibling of a child who has already been adopted by the applicant, aims to ensure the child's right to maintain family relations under Article 8 of the European Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has stated that the principle of family unity should be taken into account in placements; for example, siblings should not be separated.<sup>11</sup> The proposal that the MFoF should assess both the reliability of the placement method and whether the adoption is in the best interests of the child, and the proposal that responsibility for assessing whether the adoption procedure may continue under Article 17(c) of the 1993 Hague Convention, aims to ensure compliance with the HCCH and UN recommendation that international adoptions should only be carried out with the assistance of accredited bodies in both the receiving and the country of origin.

The proposal that the court should reject an application for adoption if the applicant does not have a permit from the MFoF aims to ensure that the competent authorities have ensured that the adoption of a child is in the best interests of the child. These requirements should therefore be met in order for the adoption to be considered. This is a legitimate purpose of the proposed scheme and is therefore considered to be compatible with Article 6 of the European Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The proposal and its consequences are described in detail in section 8.10.5.

The proposals on counselling and support in tracing origins aim to fulfil Sweden's obligations under Article 9(c) of the 1993 Hague Convention to promote counselling in adoption matters and opportunities for assistance and support after adoption. According to the HCCH, states must do everything in their power to fulfil this obligation, which includes meeting the needs of both adopted persons and their families. (<sup>12</sup>) The proposal on individual support in cases of suspected irregularities in adoption aims to fulfil Sweden's responsibility

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<sup>11</sup> Children's Ombudsman. Swedish translation of the *Committee on the Rights of the Child's general comment No. 6 on the treatment of unaccompanied children and children separated from their parents in the country of origin* (CRC/C/GC/6) p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> HCCH (2008), *The Implementation and Application of the 1993 Hague Intercountry Adoption Convention*. Grsde No.t, p. 125.

to investigate illegal adoptions and, in cases where the child has been illegally deprived of part or all of their identity, provide appropriate support and protection to restore it in accordance with Article 8.2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. How this responsibility is to be fulfilled is described in section 9.8.1.

In section 7.6, I urge the Government to speed up the process for Sweden to ratify the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (abbreviated to UNCED). The purpose of rapid ratification is to strengthen the rights of persons whose adoptions may fall within the definition of enforced disappearance under the Convention.

Overall, my proposals mean that the rights of the child are strengthened in the adoption process and are therefore also directly linked to several goals and targets in Agenda 2030, such as Goal 10 on reducing inequality and Target 16.2 on protecting children from abuse, exploitation, trafficking and violence. Our proposals in Chapter 9 on support for adopted persons and their families are linked to Goal 3 on good health and well-being.

## 10.9 Gender equality

More adopted women than men have sought adoption-specific support in the form of counselling and support in searching for their origins, which MFoF offers. To date, almost four out of five people who have sought counselling through MFoF have been women. It is possible that many men are reluctant to seek support even if they need it.

My proposal to gather all support under one "roof", make the support more widely known and easily accessible, offer support in various forms, in different locations and without excessive waiting times, increases the chances that all those who need support will also receive it. An informative and guiding web portal that collects and disseminates knowledge can also "lower the thresholds" for receiving information and support. It gives internationally adopted persons a way to read up on the subject themselves. on adoption-related issues, the support offered by the state, and various types of advice. In addition, the proposal that the resource centre should offer various forms of physical and digital forums and meeting places for adoptees and their families could, in some cases, be aimed specifically at the male group. It is possible that the proposal for a new and more accessible counselling service based on greater freedom of choice and higher availability

throughout the country may reduce overrepresentation, even though it is established that women in general consume more healthcare than men in general. This could mean that more men receive the help they need, while at the same time the comparatively large group of women who have used and are likely to continue to use the support will receive better support in the future.

The proposal for improved counselling also means that more counsellors will be needed in the future. There is an overrepresentation of women among psychotherapists, psychologists and other professions that may offer counselling. The proposal therefore particularly promotes employment opportunities for women.

The proposal to discontinue mediation services will affect men and women differently. The adoption agency that currently mediates adoptions (AC) has more female than male employees. However, this involves only a small number of people. When the mediation activities cease, fewer children will also be adopted internationally to Sweden. In 2024, twice as many boys as girls were mediated for international adoption via AC to Sweden: 24 boys and 12 girls. This means that boys are more affected by the proposals than girls in this respect.

Most of the birth parents affected by the proposal are women. It is still significantly more common for mothers than fathers to give up children for international adoption.

## **10.10 Consequences for crime and crime prevention work**

The proposals to establish a resource centre and strengthen support for adopted persons, both through direct support to the target group and through professionals who encounter adopted persons in their work, could have certain consequences for crime and crime prevention work. Research shows that internationally adopted persons not only have a higher risk of mental ill health, but also of antisocial behaviour, substance abuse and crime compared to the rest of the population. Access to professional support reduces the risk of future ill health, and improved support may also reduce the risk of crime and thus have a crime prevention effect.

The introduction of grants could, in theory, lead to a risk of crime in the form of benefit fraud. However, given the relatively low amount of the new travel grant, combined with the fact that the support can only be granted once per person, the risk of fraud and overuse is considered to be low.

The proposal to prohibit the placement of children from abroad for adoption in Sweden will eliminate the risk of illegal activities that could have arisen in the placement of adoptions. I believe that ending adoption mediation will not lead to an increase in the number of international adoptions. Even if this were to happen, my proposal to strengthen legal certainty in international adoptions would reduce the risk of illegal or criminal acts. Among other things, permission from the MFoF will be required to adopt a child whose original home is in another country, and the MFoF will assess whether the mediation method is reliable and whether the adoption is in the best interests of the child, as well as taking over responsibility for assessing whether the adoption process may continue from the social welfare committees.

Furthermore, an application for adoption may only be considered by the court if the MFoF has granted permission for the adoption. All of this is intended to ensure that the adoption is in the best interests of the child and to curb illegalities and other irregularities in adoption activities.

However, it cannot be completely ruled out that illegal acts may occur in future adoptions. Nevertheless, my assessment is that my proposals will not lead to more illegal acts in connection with adoptions, largely because future adoptions will be limited to known children. Permission for international adoption may only be granted if the child is related to the adoptive parents or their adopted children, or if there are other special reasons for adoption based on the personal relationship between the applicant and the child.

## **10.11 Opportunities to achieve integration policy objectives**

The proposal for improved adoption-specific support for adoptees, the general public and professionals has the potential to contribute to integration policy objectives. One of the integration policy sub-objectives concerns social and cultural integration, including

increasing the proportion of foreign-born persons who feel a sense of belonging and participation in society. The prevalence of phenomena that limit the opportunities of foreign-born women and men, girls and boys to live a free, dignified and independent life within the community should be reduced. The proposal that the resource centre should offer various forms of physical and digital forums and meeting places for adoptees and their families can contribute to this. Improved and more accessible counselling services can also support adoptees in dealing with issues and experiences of exclusion, liminality and discrimination, which our investigation has shown to be common among internationally adopted persons. Many internationally adopted persons in Sweden whom we have spoken to have also experienced racism, which can counteract the experience of belonging and participation in society. The proposal for knowledge-raising support for the general public and, above all, for professionals who encounter internationally adopted persons in their work, has the potential to counteract racism in society and ignorance or poor treatment by staff in, for example, psychiatry, other health and medical care, social services, and preschools and schools. The proposal could therefore also contribute to the integration policy goals of social and cultural integration.

## **10.12 Socio-economic analysis**

### **The proposal for improved adoption-specific support**

There are currently around 60,000 internationally adopted people in Sweden. Many are doing well, but research shows that internationally adopted people as a group have an increased risk of mental ill health, long-term sick leave and involuntary loneliness. Internationally adopted persons have more contact with psychiatric care as adults than the rest of the population (60 per cent more than the rest of the population). They are also more likely than the rest of the population to be outside the labour market for long periods due to illness (twice as often). The support currently offered to adopted persons and their families does not meet their needs.

The Swedish state has a special responsibility for internationally adopted persons. According to the HCCH, states must do everything in their power to fulfil this obligation, which includes meeting the needs of both adopted persons and their families.

meeting the needs of both adopted persons and their families. Both international and Swedish law also contain provisions concerning the right of adopted persons to their origins and identity. There are also ethical arguments for the Swedish state having a special responsibility for internationally adopted persons, partly on the basis of the group's vulnerability and in light of the irregularities that have been revealed and which the Swedish authorities have failed to prevent. The Swedish state has long supported adoptive parents and adoption organisations in order to enable children to be placed for international adoption in Sweden.

The Swedish state should now offer the best possible support to these individuals and their families, who together constitute a large group of people. The proposals mean that we are moving from support for adoption to support for those who have been adopted. The proposal means that the resource centre will offer counselling, forums for sharing experiences, support in searching for origins, support in cases of suspected irregularities, grants for return travel, guidance to archives, promotion of adoption-related research, skills enhancement for the profession, and a web portal that collects information, knowledge and tips of various kinds.

The introduction of adoption-specific support as proposed can be expected to have several positive consequences compared to not introducing it. My proposal is to establish a national resource centre that offers better, broader and more accessible adoption-specific support than is currently available. A so-called zero alternative would instead mean that the current forms of adoption-specific support would continue without any new measures, i.e. counselling and support in searching for origins.

The positive consequences are twofold: firstly, the value for recipients in terms of better support and well-being, and secondly, reduced social expenditure in the long term as a result of lower levels of ill health and healthcare costs. Early and effective support can prevent mental ill health and social problems, reducing the need for extensive intervention later in life. New forms of support are also expected to lead to increased employment through new services and professional roles in therapy, counselling and research. Finally, the support is expected to improve the mental health of adoptees and their relatives. This is valuable in itself, but can also lead to increased employment and fewer sick leave days, which benefits both the individual and society. As we mentioned earlier in this chapter, new adoption-specific support is expected to have a positive impact on equality, justice and different groups in society. The new counselling

The support means greater freedom of choice with more suppliers and greater geographical coverage, which can promote equality between urban and rural areas and between women and men.

The negative consequences that may arise from the proposals for adoption-specific support mainly concern increased costs. New forms of support will cost the state more than what is currently allocated for adoption-specific support. The proposals are expected to lead to increased demand for support, and if more adopted persons and their relatives seek support, this will lead to increased costs. The planned increase in professional competence means that healthcare and social services personnel may need to spend time on training in adoption-specific issues. The application procedure for return travel grants requires some administration by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, but the agency's established routines and IT support for adoption grants should be able to be utilised. In order to achieve the desired impact of the new support measures, the resource centre needs to ensure an implementation process involving marketing and dialogue with relevant parties. This will entail increased costs, at least initially. Although demand for support is initially expected to increase, costs should level off over time, as the target group is not expected to grow. The forecasts we have commissioned show that the target group will decline over time, but not until after 2050. The need for support is expected to remain at roughly the same level until then and decline thereafter. Long-term support therefore needs to be established.

There is also a certain risk that the new support may have more unexpected negative effects. If demand is high, it could lead to long queues for the helpline, for example, which could give the target group a negative image and perception of the support. At the same time, there are already queues for the helpline that is offered today. More providers and a maximum limit on the number of calls are two ways to reduce the queues. To ensure that the initiative does not turn into a negative experience for the target group, it is important that the support is correctly dimensioned. There could also be unequal access to the new helpline. If the new helpline does not reach the whole country, adoptees in certain areas may have poorer access to physical helpline support than others. On this point, however, the situation cannot be worse than the current support service, which is only offered in a few locations in the country. Furthermore, there could be a shortage of expertise. If many new actors are involved, the quality may vary, especially if specific knowledge of adoption is lacking at the outset.

specific knowledge is initially lacking. In the worst case, this could lead to unscrupulous actors offering inadequate help. The resource centre can counteract this by setting clear criteria in the procurement process and through continuous supervision, experience exchanges and skills development for the counsellors.

There is a certain risk that the introduction of new or expanded support could reinforce the stigma surrounding adoption and perceptions that adoption is associated with problems. At the same time, expanded support could provide the target group with more knowledge, confirmation and recognition. Support can provide confirmation of feelings and events linked to adoption, which can have a positive impact on a person's well-being. If the state provides support in, for example, searching for one's origins, this could create tensions between adoptees and their adoptive parents, leading to family conflicts and increased psychological stress. Although increased knowledge about one's origins can be healing, in the short term it can arouse difficult feelings. In order to address this, good and well-dimensioned counselling support is required. It is also important that the new forms of support are followed up by an external party after a certain period of time to assess whether they have had the intended effect.

If my proposals for improved adoption-specific support are not implemented, the problems may persist or worsen. If new forms of adoption-specific support are introduced, the situation for the target group can instead be improved so that internationally adopted persons can feel better, increase their employment rate and reduce healthcare costs. The overall conclusion is that the new forms of adoption-specific support are expected to meet the needs of the target group to a greater extent than is currently the case. The proposal will increase social costs in the short term but may reduce them in the long term.

### **Proposal to discontinue adoption mediation**

As stated in section 8.10, the proposal is that it should not be permitted to arrange for children from abroad to be adopted in Sweden. The proposal is based on the overall assessment that international adoption mediation is no longer a sustainable solution for protecting children's interests. Adoption services are problematic from a child rights perspective because they are based on a demand for children, which can hinder long-term efforts to improve children's

living conditions in their home countries and create incentives for irregularities. Swedish authorities also do not have the ability or even the right to fully control the processes carried out in other countries and therefore cannot guarantee that irregularities do not occur in partner countries.

According to the proposal, however, cross-border adoption will be permitted, but with stronger state control. For example, permission from the MFoF will be required to adopt a child from another country, and this will only be granted if the child is related to the applicant or if there is a close personal relationship. The rules designed to ensure the best interests of the child in adoption must be respected, so if the applicant does not have permission from the MFoF, the court must reject the adoption application. According to the proposal, the MFoF must also assess whether the mediation method is reliable and whether the adoption is in the best interests of the child, and this assessment must be made before the child leaves their home country. In order to ensure that all documentation is available and correct, the important assessment of whether the adoption process may continue should also be transferred from the social welfare committees to the MFoF, which is better equipped to carry out this assessment. The authority should establish cooperation with an actor who can verify that the adoption documents are genuine.

The "zero alternative" that we compare the proposal with in the analysis is that adoption activities continue as they are today, where adoptions are arranged through an adoption organisation or as an individual adoption based on the current regulations.

The proposal to no longer allow children from abroad to be placed for adoption in Sweden is expected to have several positive consequences. The proposal reduces the risk of financial considerations and adults' desire for children being prioritised over children's needs for adoption. The proposal means that some irregularities can be avoided and that children who do not need international adoption can instead grow up in their home country. At the macro level, the proposal also contributes to strengthening the long-term development of improving children's living conditions in their home countries.

One risk with the proposal is that there may be children who really needed to be adopted internationally and who, under the proposal, risk remaining in their home country. However, there are many other countries that continue to place children for adoption, so it is likely that most children who really need to be placed for international adoption

can go to a recipient country other than Sweden. In addition, the number of children placed for adoption in Sweden through Swedish adoption organisations is currently very small. In 2024, 54 children were placed through a Swedish organisation, 18 of which were placed by BFA, which has now decided to discontinue its placement activities.

In other words, even today, only a limited number of children find a new family in Sweden through international adoption placement.

The proposal to abolish mediation activities also entails several cost savings. One consequence of the proposal is that the resources spent on authorising and supervising adoption organisations will no longer be needed. In addition, the state financial contribution that adoption organisations have received for mediation activities will no longer be necessary. Another consequence of the proposal is that the financial support provided to parents for costs associated with the adoption of children (the adoption grant) will also be abolished. The savings that can be made in this area can, as we show below, be used to finance support for people who have already been adopted internationally to Sweden. I believe that it is of greater benefit to society to invest resources in providing good support to the approximately 60,000 adopted persons and their families than to invest resources in maintaining and developing a system for giving a few children per year a new family in Sweden through international adoption.

The various proposals I am putting forward to strengthen state control of cross-border adoptions that will continue to be permitted have clearly positive consequences. Ensuring that adoptions arranged in Sweden in the future are legally secure and in the best interests of the child is of great importance for the individual child and family. Strengthened control may also counteract the social costs that could potentially arise when irregularities negatively affect the person concerned. These proposals do not entail any increased costs for the state, but fall within the scope of the MFoF's existing mandate.

## **10.13 Financial implications of the proposals and proposals for financing**

### **10.13.1 Introduction**

In this section, we present the financial implications of the proposals, our cost estimates and proposals for financing the proposals. In the first section, we describe the size and development of the target group as a basis for our demand forecasts for adoption-specific support.

### **10.13.2 Description of the size and development of the target group over time as a basis for demand forecasts**

It is important to be able to plan the scope of the direct support included in adoption-specific support. To do this, it is necessary to have knowledge of what the target group's demand for support will look like in the future.

Experience from the counselling support currently offered through MFoF shows that demand for support varies according to gender and age. Women seek and make greater use of the support than men, and women aged 23–30 and 39–46 have sought counselling support to a greater extent than other age groups. Of the 89 individuals who took advantage of MFoF's support for origin searches during the period 2020–2023, 72 per cent were women and 28 per cent were men. Those who sought support were between 18 and 58 years old, with an average age of 38.

In order to assess the demand for direct support in the future, we have commissioned a survey<sup>13</sup> of the current age distribution among adopted persons and forecasts of how the age distribution will develop in the future.

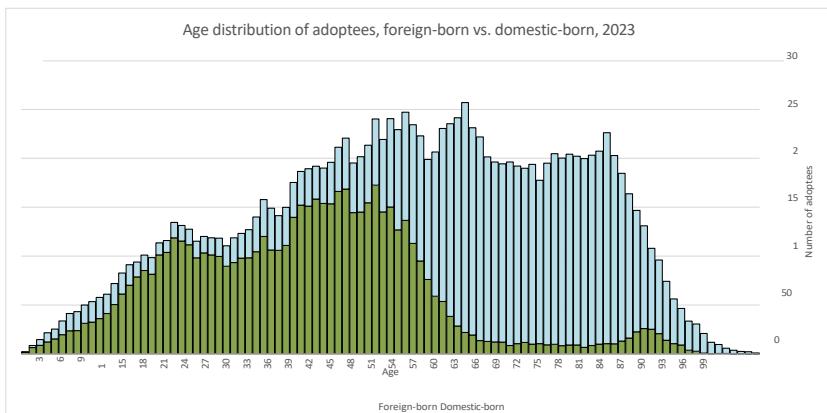
#### **Age and gender distribution of the target group in 2023**

According to Statistics Sweden's population statistics, there were just over 136,000 adopted persons in Sweden in 2023. Of these, 43 per cent (58,481) born abroad and 57 per cent (77,632) born in Sweden. Figure 10.1 shows the age distribution for the two groups in 2023.

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<sup>13</sup> Governo (2025), *Intetnatsonella adoptsonet: demografiska och socsokonomiska prognoset. Dellevetans t: Ptognos övet adopterades åldertsfördelnsng, 2025–2050, 2025-03-10.*

**Figure 10.1** Age distribution of adopted persons in 2023, broken down by domestic and foreign-born



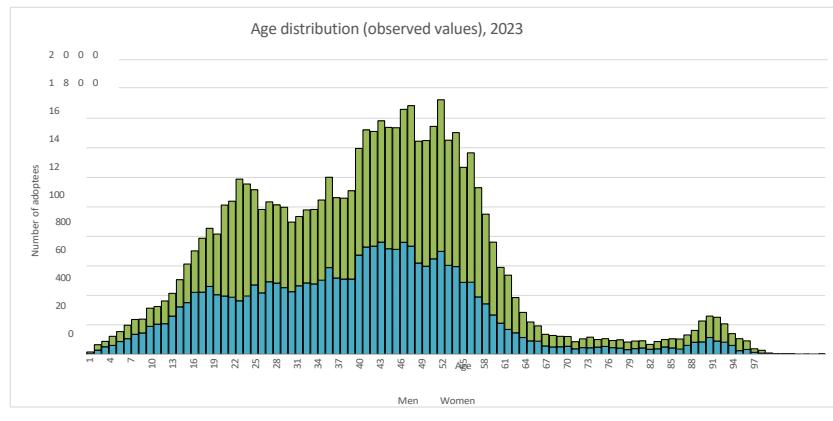
Source: Governo (2025) SCB, 2023 figures.

As shown in the diagram above, the group of nationally adopted persons is older than the group of internationally adopted persons. This is because national adoptions have historically been more common. Most adopted persons over the age of 50 were born in Sweden, while most foreign-born adoptees are younger than 50.

Figure 10.2 shows the age distribution among internationally adopted persons. Of all internationally adopted persons in Sweden, 55 per cent are women and 45 per cent are men, but there are differences between different age groups. In the 19–30 age group, women are clearly overrepresented (58 per cent compared with 42 per cent for men), while among adopted persons under the age of 18, the opposite is true (57 per cent men).

19–30 age group, women are clearly overrepresented (58 per cent compared to 42 per cent for men), while among adoptees under the age of 18, the opposite is true (57 per cent men and 43 per cent women).

**Figure 10.2      Gender and age distribution for internationally adopted persons (women and men) in 2023**



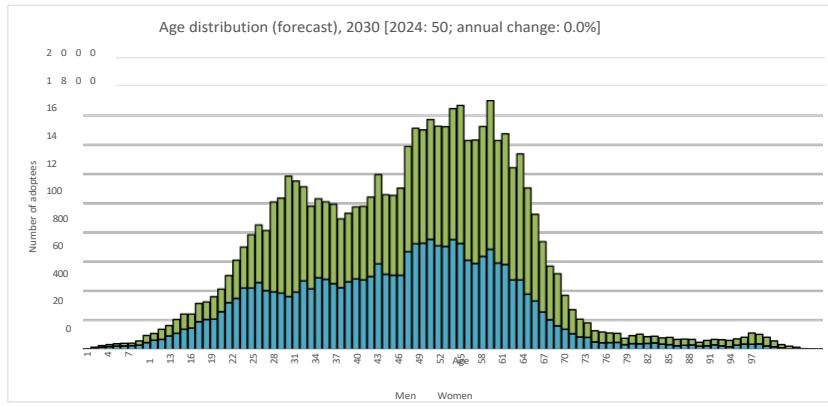
Source: Governo (2025).

Women have applied for and received the counselling support currently offered by MFoF to a greater extent than men. According to the analysis, this can only be partly explained by the fact that there is a slight predominance of women among internationally adopted persons in Sweden. This suggests that women either have a greater need for counselling support or that they are more inclined to seek support.

### Forecast for the age development of the target group

Based on statistics on the age distribution among internationally adopted persons today, we have developed a forecasting model to predict the age development of this group until 2050. This information is important for understanding and forecasting future support needs. The forecasts have been made for 2030, 2040 and 2050 and are presented below. We have calculated based on an inflow of 50 internationally adopted persons per year, which is based on an estimate of the number of international adoptions when the mediation service is phased out. If we were to calculate an additional 30 mediated adoptions per year, the difference in the forecasts would be marginal.

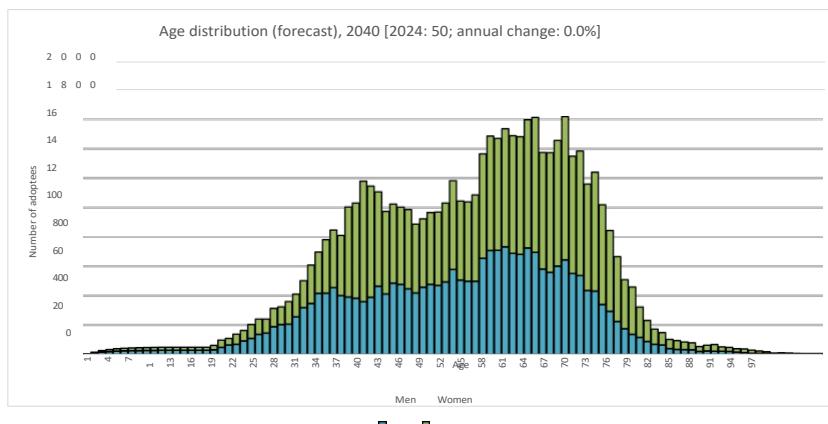
**Figure 10.3** Forecast of the age distribution among internationally adopted persons (women and men) in 2030



Source: Governo (2025).

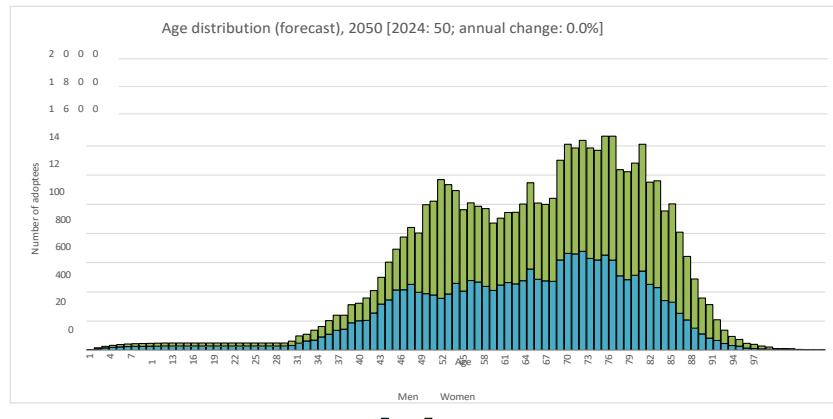
As shown in Figure 10.3 above, the number of people in the 25–35 age group and the 45–65 age group will have increased by 2030. This partly concerns the age groups that made extensive use of MFoF support in 2024, and it could therefore be assumed that demand for support would remain high in these groups.

**Figure 10.4** Forecast of age distribution among internationally adopted persons (women and men) in 2040



Source: Governo (2025).

Figure 10.4 shows the age distribution in 2040, which indicates that the 35–45 and 55–75 age groups are now the largest. The younger group corresponds well with those who currently request support from MFoF, but the older age group is also large and may request various forms of support.

**Figure****Forecast of the age distribution among internationally adopted persons (women and men) in 2050**

Source: Governo (2025).

Figure 10.5 above shows that the largest age groups are now the 40–50 age group and the 65–75 age group.

## Summary

The forecast model shows the future age distribution for the group of internationally adopted persons based on the current demographic structure. It shows that the average age among internationally adopted persons will increase until 2050 and that the total number of internationally adopted persons in Sweden will decrease from the current 58,000 individuals to approximately 50,000 individuals in 2050.

The 20–30 age group will be large in 2030 and then decline. For the 47–54 age group, we first see a slight increase until 2030 (from approximately 11,000 to just over 12,000 individuals), followed by a decrease to approximately 8,000 individuals in 2050. For the 55–62 age group, there will be a significant increase from just over 3,000 today to just over 12,000 individuals

in 2035, before declining to approximately 8,000 in 2050. For the age group over 63, there will also be a significant increase from the current approximately 3,500 individuals to approximately 25,000 individuals in 2050.

The overall picture is that there will be a roughly equal number of internationally adopted persons until around 2050 who are at an age where they are likely to require adoption-specific support. After 2050, the group will decrease in number and thus also the need for support. Forecasts show that adoption-specific support will need to be offered for several decades to come, even if the number of adoptions continues to decline or remains at today's level. At the same time, it is clear that the need for support will gradually decline. In 2080, if the influx of adoptions does not increase, there will only be a small group of adoptees who are likely to need support.

However, we still know relatively little about how demand for support will develop in different age groups. The need for support can vary with age; for example, the needs of a 30-year-old may differ from those of a 65-year-old. Since the need for support is lifelong, it can also vary in different stages of life, and support may therefore need to be adapted based on the age distribution at different points in time. What is relevant today may not be as relevant in 20 or 30 years.

### **10.13.3 Costs for adoption-specific support**

In this section, we review the costs of the proposal for adoption-specific support. The cost estimates include costs for a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues, costs for state grants to organisations for support in tracing origins, costs for grants for return travel, and costs for research in the field of adoption. In the cost estimate for the resource centre, we indirectly report the anticipated savings resulting from the proposal to phase out the mediation activities for international adoptions. Finally, we report the total costs of the proposals and how they can be financed.

## Costs for a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues

### *The proposal*

As stated in section 9.14, the proposal is that the national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues should be established on 1 September 2026 as a separate unit at the MFoF, located in Stockholm. In order to provide high geographical accessibility, the resource centre should have premises in central Stockholm. The resource centre should comprise twelve full-time employees. This includes a manager, a person who coordinates the counselling service, and a person who will work with legal support and general legal expertise. Five people will build up and offer support in searching for origins and support in cases of suspected irregularities. Two of the positions will be temporary project positions that may consist of several part-time positions or shorter project positions. Two people will work with knowledge support for the profession and with research-related issues. In addition, two full-time equivalents will be allocated to support communication, finance and IT-related issues concerning the resource centre. The support resources may be partly utilised from existing staff within MFoF, but we estimate costs for two full-time equivalents.

According to the proposal, the special task of providing counselling support, for which MFoF currently receives special funding, will be included as an instructional task for the resource centre and financed through administrative appropriations. The administrative appropriation shall also cover the costs of premises, the production of reports and evaluations for the resource centre, and costs relating to the resource centre's tasks of tracing origins, providing support in cases of suspected irregularities, and providing knowledge support and research.

### *Calculation of the cost for the resource centre*

The costs of the proposal include staff at the resource centre, premises for the unit in Stockholm and costs related to the resource centre's activities as described above.

The resource centre will comprise twelve full-time employees. In our calculations, we have based our estimates on a standard cost for staff at the resource centre

We therefore estimate the resource centre's personnel costs at SEK 12 million per year. The costs for the unit in Stockholm are estimated at SEK 1.5 million per year.

Other costs related to the resource centre's activities are: origin searches; support in cases of suspected irregularities; reports and evaluations; training, conferences and networking. We estimate the costs to be 1 million per item per year, i.e. a total of 3 million Swedish kronor.

Premises costs are based on ESV's standard rents for group 1 (Stockholm within the city limits), which for 2026 are SEK 4,800 per square metre per year.<sup>14</sup> We estimate a floor space of 250 square metres to provide space for meeting rooms and other types of gathering areas that can be used for exchanges of experience and other gatherings, in addition to workplaces. This means a premises cost of SEK 1.2 million per year.

Other costs for the resource centre include IT support, travel and other expenses, which we estimate at SEK 2.7 million per year.

A summary of the estimated costs for the resource centre for the period 2026–2028 is shown in Table 10.1 below. The costs for 2026 are based on the assumption that the resource centre will be established and commence operations on 1 September 2026.

**Table 10.1 Costs for the national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues per year for the period 2026–2028**

Cost item	Year	Year	Year
Resource centre staff	4,000	12,000,000	12,000,000
Operational costs	1,500,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
Premises	400,000	1,200,000	1,200,000
Other costs	1,700,000	2,700,000	2,700,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,600,000</b>	<b>18,900,000</b>	<b>18,900,000</b>

We assess the costs for the resource centre to be stable over time, assuming that the activities will continue to have the scope we propose. For a 10-year period, one can expect a PLO indexation for salaries and an increase in the costs for premises

<sup>14</sup> ESV statistics on standard rents, 2015–2026. 2015–2026 – Standard rents. Retrieved 31 March 2025.

<sup>15</sup> The statistics for reference values show that the pattern for group 1 is an increase of approximately 60 per cent over 10 years.

### *Calculation of the cost of call support*

The assessment is that there is a great need for counselling support and that the proposal for counselling support with broader and deeper expertise and greater availability, offered by more providers in different parts of the country, will lead to increased demand for support.

In terms of the costs of external counselling services, we estimate that the cost will amount to SEK 10 million per year once the counselling services are in place, well known and fully utilised. For 2026, we estimate the cost of the helpline to be SEK 4 million, which is the difference between SEK 10 million and the MFoF's budget for the existing helpline, which expires in 2026. We believe it is better to start with a certain budget per year and adapt the helpline service based on that. However, if demand increases, the budget can be raised. Our assessment is that demand for counselling support will increase compared to today, which will lead to higher costs and thus require a higher budget.

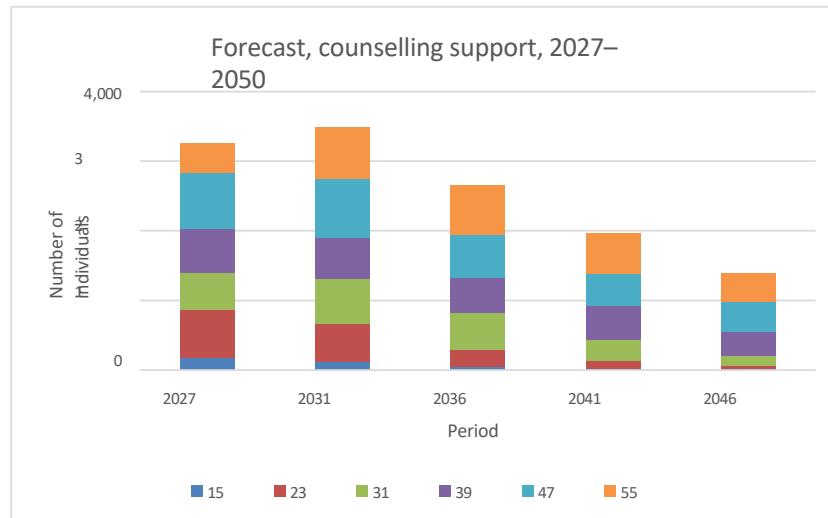
The cost or budget for the helpline could also be calculated based on an estimated demand for support and an estimated unit cost per call. However, this requires that we have knowledge of or make assumptions about the number of calls and the unit cost. We have chosen not to make such a calculation. In order to still provide a picture of what the demand for counselling support might look like over time, we have had such a calculation made based on the demand for MFoF's counselling support multiplied by four, i.e. we expect a fourfold increase in demand for support. This is based on the assumption that the same number of people who have used MFoF's counselling service may have received psychosocial support from, for example, adoption organisations, adoptee associations and private psychotherapists, and that some of them will turn to the proposed counselling service in the future. We also base this on the assumption that demand will double due to increased awareness of the support available and increased quality and satisfaction. We have also compared our assumption about future demand for support with the size of

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<sup>15</sup> ESV statistics on standard rents, 2015–2026. 2015–2026 - Standard rents. Retrieved 31 March 2025.

percentage of all adopted individuals who receive similar counselling support each year in Denmark. It appears that our estimate of demand is very close to the outcome in Denmark. Figure 10.6 shows a forecast of the number of future applicants for counselling support for different time periods.

**Figure 10.6 Forecast for the number of future applicants for counselling support in different age groups 2027–2050 (conversion factor 4)**



Source: Governo 2025.

The figures in the forecast show the number of individuals. If you want to calculate the number of calls instead, all values must be multiplied by the average number of calls per individual. This model can be used to calculate the scope of a call support service and adapted based on the maximum number of support occasions per individual.

#### *Net cost of the proposal and financial impact*

The costs of the proposal to establish a national resource centre must be weighed against the MFoF's current activities and the effects on the MFoF's activities and costs of the proposal to phase out international adoption services and the proposal to strengthen legal certainty in international adoption.

The MFoF's appropriation for international adoption activities amounts to SEK 13.2 million for 2025. In addition, the agency has received SEK 9.8 million in special grants for 2025 for the assignment of counselling support, origin searches and national contact point irregularities. For 2026, the Government estimates that SEK 8.8 million will be allocated for the assignment, provided that the Riksdag appropriates funds for the current grant.<sup>(16)</sup> For 2025, the MFoF thus has a total of SEK 23 million for international adoption activities.<sup>17</sup> Assuming that the annual appropriation will remain the same for the period 2026–2028 and that the grant funds for 2026 will also apply to 2027 and 2028, the MFoF's annual budget for 2026–2028 will amount to SEK 22 million. For 2026, there will be some overlap with existing assignments, which must be addressed in the allocation of funds to the authority. We are therefore focusing on 2027–2028 in terms of funding.

The MFoF's existing budget for 2027–2028 can be compared with the estimated costs for the proposals for 2027 and 2028 of SEK 28.9 million. The MFoF's international adoption activities currently comprise just over ten full-time employees within international adoption activities and one manager. Of these, five work with authorisation and supervision of the mediation activities and issues relating to individual adoptions. Four work with origin searches, legal support and contact point irregularities, and just under one full-time equivalent provides knowledge support to social welfare committees.<sup>(18)</sup> The proposal to phase out mediation activities means that the tasks relating to authorisation and supervision of mediation activities through adoption organisations will disappear from the MFoF. However, we assess that the proposal to strengthen legal certainty in international adoption will require slightly increased resources compared to today. We assess that the need for support to social services in international adoption matters is the same. Overall, we assess that four full-time equivalents will be saved through our proposals in these areas. The five full-time equivalents currently working with origin searches, legal support and contact point irregularities will be included in the activities relating to a national resource centre. This means funding for nine out of twelve full-time equivalents (SEK 9 million). We are aware that

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<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 2025-01-23 *Uppdtag tsll Myndigheten för famsljett och fötäldraskaps- support to provide support to nationally adopted children and adoptive parents.* S2025/00113.

<sup>17</sup> Telephone conversation with MFoF 31 March 2025.

<sup>18</sup> MFoF 28 February 2025 Estimated costs for a resource centre for international adoptions.

During a transition period, there will be a need for staff at MFoF to ensure a controlled winding up of the mediation activities, but the costs for this have not been calculated. With regard to counselling support, our budget is SEK 10 million, compared with MFoF's budget of SEK 6 million. Based on the fact that the subsidy for 2026 amounts to SEK 8.8 million, there is an additional SEK 2.8 million available to finance the external helpline. In addition to this, there are funds from MFoF's appropriation which, based on the new assignment as a national resource centre, should be allocated to finance the resource centre. Based on a simplified calculation, we estimate that this amounts to approximately SEK 2.2 million (SEK 13.2 million minus SEK 10 million for staff and

SEK 1 million for premises, etc. in Skellefteå). In total, this gives funding from existing MFoF funds of SEK 20 million.

The difference compared to our budget for the resource centre for 2027 and 2028 is therefore SEK 8.9 million, which requires additional funding. The renewed mandate given by the Government to MFoF in January 2025, which covers the parts to be included in the resource centre's activities – counselling, origin searches and a contact point for irregularities – is financed through Expenditure Area 9, appropriation 4:7 Contributions to the development of social work, etc., appropriation item 11 Development of social work – part to the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support. social work – part to the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support.<sup>19</sup> As it is proposed that this assignment be made permanent and included in the MFoF's and the resource centre's statutory assignments, it is proposed that funds from appropriation 4:7 be transferred to the MFoF's administrative appropriation and increased by a further SEK 9 million to fully finance the resource centre.

#### *Proposal for cost centre allocation of funds not included in appropriation 4:/*

The assignment for a resource centre and adoption-specific counselling support aims to fulfil Sweden's obligations under Article 9(c) of the 1993 Hague Convention to promote counselling in adoption matters and opportunities for help and support after adoption. According to the HCCH, states must do everything in their power to fulfil this obligation, which includes meeting the needs of both adoptees

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<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs 23 January 2025 *Decision by the Authority for Family and Parental Support to provide support to internationally adopted persons and adoptive parents*. S2025/00113.

individuals and their families. It has long been known that internationally adopted children have a particular need for support, but despite this, it was not until 2021 that support began to be offered. I therefore believe that there are very strong reasons for the Riksdag and the Government to provide the additional funds needed to finance the resource centre and counselling support in accordance with my proposal.

If the remaining costs of 8.95 million cannot be financed through an increased appropriation, this will require a significant reduction in the level of ambition for the resource centre and counselling service. I believe this would be highly inappropriate, but nevertheless propose the following measures in order to submit a fully financed proposal:

1. Reduce the costs of support for communication, finance and IT-related issues by making full use of existing resources within MFoF. This will result in a cost reduction of SEK 2 million.
2. Reduce other costs by SEK 1 million.
3. Reduce the operational costs for origin searches, support in cases of suspected irregularities, reports and evaluations, training, conferences and networks from 3 to 2 million Swedish kronor.
4. Reduce the number of full-time equivalents at the resource centre working with origin searches from 5 to 4 full-time equivalents.
5. Reduce the budget for counselling support by SEK 4 million to the current budget of SEK 6 million.

These measures constitute a financing proposal for a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues, which involves a significant reduction in ambition but is fully financed. The measures would mean a reduction of one third of the intended budget for the resource centre. In terms of resources, the level of support would be the same as the counselling support currently offered through MFoF, i.e. a zero alternative. Such a significant cut would send a very negative signal to internationally adopted persons and once again show that the state is not willing to fully assume its responsibility and offer long-term support of high quality and accessibility.

## Costs of state subsidies to organisations providing support in tracing origins

### *Proposal*

As stated in section 9.13, the proposal is that the government should decide on a regulation on state subsidies for a pilot project with organisations that assist adopted persons in tracing their origins. The proposal is important in order to make use of the expertise that exists within civil society. The organisations that receive state grants can provide more concrete and practical support than the more general support that the resource centre can provide. In addition, the proposal involves the target group, which contributes to increased legitimacy for the activity. It also enables adoption organisations that have arranged adoptions to contribute their knowledge and experience.

The establishment of the activities should be carried out in stages and begin with a trial programme to test the activities on a smaller scale, so that they can then be followed up and evaluated. The MFoF will be the authority responsible for decisions on grants and payments, and will be tasked by the government with coordinating and evaluating the trial programme. It is also proposed that the MFoF be given the right to issue regulations regarding the requirements that can be imposed on civil society organisations in order to receive the state grant.

Long-term funding is needed to enable stable, high-quality activities to be established and evaluated over time. The proposal is therefore that decisions on state grants should be made for three years, but that the grants should be paid annually and subject to the availability of funds. This presupposes that the Riksdag decides on a so-called order authorisation, which sometimes occurs for appropriations that are wholly or partly allocated to civil society organisations with the aim create stability and long-term planning.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> SOU 2023:40 *Improved opportunities for the state to compete with the state according to the state convention*, p. 512.

*Calculation of the cost of the proposal*

The state subsidy for a pilot project involving organisations that assist adopted persons in searching for their origins is proposed to amount to SEK 5 million per year. The regulation is proposed to enter into force on 1 September 2026 and be applied for the first time in relation to state subsidies for 2027. This means that state subsidies will not begin to be paid out until 2027.

In our calculations, we have used a standard amount of SEK 1 million per full-time employee. This means that, from the second year onwards, the state subsidy should be able to finance five full-time employees or ten part-time employees or the equivalent. One starting point has been that there should be a balance between how much of the support for tracing origins should be provided by the resource centre and how much of the work should be outsourced to civil society. According to my proposal, the number of full-time employees at the resource centre working on building up and offering support for origin searches and support in cases of suspected irregularities will be the same, i.e. five full-time employees. A government grant of SEK 5 million also makes it possible for more than one actor to receive funding, which we consider important in order to utilise the expertise and experience of different actors. In addition, it gives greater freedom of choice to an adopted person who wants to search for their origins. The cost during the first year will thus be SEK 3 million and thereafter SEK 5 million. After three years, the pilot project should be evaluated, but the intention should be to continue funding the project. Our forecasts for the future need for support in searching for origins up to 2050 show that there will be a need for support in searching for origins throughout this period, and thus for the proposed government grant.

*Assessment of the proposal*

The proposal can be partly financed by the current state subsidy of SEK 1.8 million to authorised adoption associations and national organisations for adoptees, which are financed through the MFoF's administrative grant. Today, 10 per cent of these funds can be used by adoptee associations, i.e. SEK 180,000. The remaining SEK 1.62 million can currently be used by adoption agencies for mediation activities.

Since, according to our proposal, the agency activities will cease, this SEK 1.62 million can instead be used to finance the new state subsidy to organisations that assist adoptees in searching for their origins. The new state subsidy should not be financed through the MFoF's administrative appropriation, but through appropriation 4:7 Subsidies for the development of social work, etc. within expenditure area 9. The MFoF already has funds available for other subsidies in this area (see previous section).

One option for financing the remaining costs of the proposed state subsidy is to use SEK 3.38 million from another appropriation item under appropriation 4:7. Under appropriation 4:7 Subsidies for the development of social work, etc. (ap.3), the National Board of Health and Welfare currently has nearly SEK 52 million at its disposal for subsidies to organisations in the social sector. These funds are distributed in accordance with the Ordinance (2011:1062) on state grants to certain organisations in the social sector, etc. The purpose of the state grant is to support the development of a civil society that helps people who are in or at risk of being in a vulnerable situation to improve their living conditions or create the conditions for good health on equal terms for the entire population.

## Costs for financial assistance for return travel

### *Proposal*

Adoptees should be able to receive financial assistance to enable them to travel to their country of origin. Assistance for return travel should be available to persons over the age of 18 who were adopted from abroad to Sweden before the age of 18 by someone residing in Sweden. The contribution shall be paid for the actual costs of travel to and from the adoptee's country of origin, up to 25 per cent of the price base amount, which corresponds to a maximum of SEK 14,700 in today's monetary value. The contribution shall replace the current adoption contribution that adoptive parents can receive after an adoption arranged through an authorised adoption organisation. The grant shall be paid in arrears against proof of expenditure and administered by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency.

*Calculation of the cost of the proposal*

Calculating the costs of a travel allowance needs to be based on an estimate of the demand for support based on the size and composition of the target group. Unlike counselling support and support for tracing origins, there has been no support in the form of travel allowances to date. There is therefore no historical data on which to base estimates of the number of individuals who may seek support in the future. We therefore need to make assumptions about the proportion of the target group of internationally adopted persons who will want to use a travel grant. It is reasonable to assume that the demand for a return travel grant may be greater than for other forms of support.

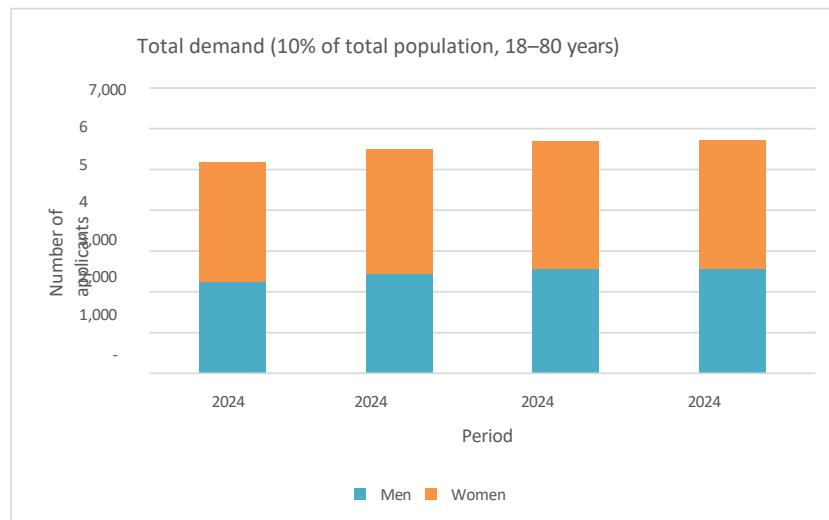
One assumption is that return travel may be requested by persons between the ages of 18 and 80. Statistics Sweden's population statistics on the number of internationally adopted persons in Sweden in 2023 show that this group amounts to just over 50,000 individuals. If all these individuals were to apply for a travel grant of the maximum amount of SEK 14,700, the total cost of the support would amount to SEK 735 million. However, demand for support depends on many different factors, including the support itself, how well known it is and how easy it is to apply for. Another factor is age, where interest in travelling to one's country of origin may be greater for some age groups than for others. An individual may not be interested in returning at one point in their life, but may be at a later point. However, we assume that not all individuals will apply for travel grants, at least not immediately and at the same time.

Based on the number of internationally adopted persons in the age group 18–80 for 2024 and at the points in time 2030, 2040 and 2050, we make a demand forecast based on the assumption that 10 per cent of the target group will apply for travel grants.<sup>21</sup> The demand forecast is shown in Figure 10.7.

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<sup>21</sup> Governo (2025), *Internationella adoptsonet: prognoset för fämnda eftersågan på dömekost*. Dellevetans 2: *Ptognos över eftersågan på dömekost, 2025–2040*.

**Figure 10.7 Forecast of total demand for travel subsidies, 10 per cent of all people aged 18–80, different periods**



Source: Governo 2025.

Assuming that 10 per cent of the target group of internationally adopted persons aged 18–80 would request support, just over 5,000 individuals in the target group aged 18–80 would apply for travel grants when a travel grant is introduced. If the period is extended until 2030, an estimated 5,500 individuals would apply for travel grants. By 2050, approximately 5,800 individuals would apply for the grant if demand remained at 10 per cent. Based on this assumption, the cost of support would amount to a maximum of SEK 73.5 million if all 5,000 individuals aged 18–80 applied for grants when they were introduced in 2026. A be- Calculations up to 2030 show that the cost would amount to a maximum of SEK 80.8 million. Assuming that not all of these individuals apply for travel grants in the first year, but rather evenly distributed over the period 2026–2030, this would entail a cost of just over SEK 16 million per year for these five years. By 2050, the total cost would amount to a maximum of SEK 85.2 million.

*A comparison with the state's cost for adoption over a thousand*

The cost of a travel grant can be compared to the adoption grants that have been paid out to individuals since 1989 for costs related to adopting kids from abroad. The grant was for adoptions arranged through an adoption organisation. From 1989 to 1991, the maximum amount was SEK 20,000. The level of the allowance was changed in 1991 and amounted to a maximum of SEK 24,000.

From 1997, a fixed amount of SEK 24,000 was introduced. From 2001, the grant amounted to a fixed amount of SEK 40,000. The most recent increase was made in 2017, when the grant was raised to its current level of SEK 75,000.

In order to compare these costs, we have calculated the total amount paid out in adoption grants since their introduction in 1989. The calculation is based on the number of arranged adoptions between 1989 and 2024 and the grant amounts that applied at different times. The calculation is shown in Table 10.2 below.

**Table 10.2 Costs for adoption grants 1989–2024**

Amounts according to today's monetary value

Period and level of adoption grants	Number of arranged adoptions	Cost of adoption allowance
1989–1990: maximum grant of SEK 20,000	1,381	27,620,000
1991–1996: maximum grant SEK 24,000	4,860	116,640,000
1997–2000: contribution of SEK 24,000	3,394	81,456,000
2001–2016: contribution 40,000 Swedish kronor	10,518	420,720,000
2017–2024: contribution SEK 75,000	1,029	77,175,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,182</b>	<b>723,611,000</b>

Source: Statistics Sweden and MFoF statistics on the number of arranged adoptions, as well as statistics from adoption organisations.

According to the calculation, almost SEK 725 million in today's monetary value has been paid out in adoption grants since the grant was introduced in 1989 and up to and including 2024. However, the actual amount paid out may be lower for the period 1989–1997, as the amount was not fixed but amounted to a maximum amount. However, given the costs associated with foreign adoption during this period, we can assume that the maximum amount was paid out in most cases.

In other words, the total amount paid by the state since 1989 to those who have adopted a child from abroad is

This is very comparable to the total cost of a travel allowance of up to 25 per cent of the price base amount, or a maximum of SEK 14,700 according to today's monetary value for all internationally adopted persons aged 18–80, which would amount to SEK 735 million. However, as we have shown above, we do not believe that all internationally adopted persons will apply for this allowance.

#### *Assessment of the proposal*

Based on the comparison above, I consider it both reasonable and appropriate for a travel grant for internationally adopted persons to be financed by the state. This represents a clear shift from a grant for international adoption to a grant for persons who have been adopted to Sweden at various times.

Based on our assumptions and calculations above, a travel grant where 10 per cent of the target group aged 18–80 "directly" apply for the support would amount to SEK 73.5 million. In order to finance this, the Riksdag and the government must assess that the costs paid out over time in adoption grants justify the allocation of a corresponding amount at a single point in time to finance a travel grant – this could be seen as "retroactive financing".

One option that would allow for full funding of the proposal is to spread the costs over time. Currently, SEK 15 million has been allocated within expenditure area 12, appropriation 1:4 for adoption grants. Given that there are currently only a small number of adoptions and that the funds for the allowance are therefore not being used, these funds should instead be used to finance the travel allowance for internationally adopted persons. With such a solution, 1,000 internationally adopted persons could be granted travel allowances each year. This covers almost the 16 million per year that we showed above is required to finance 10 per cent of all internationally adopted persons applying for the travel grant, evenly distributed over the period 2026–2030.

## Costs for research on adoptees and adoption

### *The proposal*

As stated in section 9.11, the proposal is that the resource centre should identify the need for new knowledge in the field of adoption and, based on such a needs analysis, promote the research and knowledge development that is required. There is broad consensus that knowledge and expertise on adoption-related issues need to increase in society, and this is particularly important among professionals who encounter adoptees in their work. In order to generate new knowledge that is useful for the professions that encounter internationally adopted persons, relevant and applicable research needs to be promoted.

The resource centre should communicate the need for research to relevant research bodies and research funders. The proposal also means that the government and research funders should draw attention to the issue of adoption in future initiatives and allocate funds to stimulate research in the field of adoption, for example by announcing funding for research projects in the field of adoption. The resource centre should not allocate research funds, but should have certain funds available to allocate for assignments to compile knowledge and carry out evaluations in the field of adoption. The resource centre should also compile and disseminate relevant research.

### *Estimated cost of the proposal*

The fact that the government and research funders are to allocate funds to stimulate research in the field of adoption, for example through calls for proposals for funding research projects in the field of adoption, will entail a cost. The size of this cost will depend on the level of ambition. The proposal is that the Government allocate an average of SEK 2 million per year in special funds to, for example, Forte and the Swedish Research Council to conduct research in the field of adoption.

It is suggested that the government could choose to make a larger investment with more funds allocated to adoption-related research over, for example, a five-year period. An alternative is to spread the research and its costs over a longer period of time. There is

also flexibility in terms of how much resources should be allocated to research and how much resources should be allocated to knowledge compilations and evaluations that the resource centre can order itself. However, the proposal means that a total of approximately SEK 3 million per year should be allocated for research and development, i.e. SEK 2 million for research via research funding bodies and SEK 1 million for development work via the resource centre (see previous section).

One million Swedish kronor for development work and the costs for the two full-time employees at the resource centre who will, among other things, work to stimulate and manage research, are already included above (see section "Costs for a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues").

### *Financing of the proposal*

The proposal requires an additional appropriation of SEK 2 million per year. This can be financed by the Government using part of its research budget for this purpose, for example by allocating special funds for the adoption area when one of the ongoing initiatives is completed. A national research programme in the field of adoption could be financed within expenditure area 9 via appropriation 6:2 Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare: Research (item 1). It could also be financed within expenditure area 16 via appropriation 3:1 Swedish Research Council: Research funding and research infrastructure (item 5). A financial condition could be included in the Swedish Research Council's or Forte's appropriation directions stating that funds from the appropriation item must be used for an initiative on research into adoption issues.

There may be scope for research funders to prioritise research relating to adoption within the framework of an existing initiative. The Swedish Research Council implements a number of targeted initiatives and programmes aimed at addressing various societal challenges, both nationally and globally. One example of a broader ten-year initiative that could potentially accommodate adoption-related issues is the Swedish Research Council's programme on migration and integration.

tion.<sup>22</sup> Another example is the national research programme on mental health, which the government has decided to extend. Within the framework of its research grant, Forte will allocate approximately SEK 30 million per year during 2026–2028 for research on mental health. The Government states, among other things, that there is a need for increased focus on efforts in areas such as existential health, involuntary loneliness and suicide prevention.

(<sup>23</sup>)Similarly, the Government intends to extend its investment in research in the areas of prevention and public health. Forte will allocate SEK 30 million per year between 2026 and 2028 for this purpose within the framework of its research grant. The Government states, among other things, that there is a need for increased knowledge about the mechanisms and causes behind health inequalities for different groups.<sup>24</sup>

#### 10.13.4 Total cost and financing of the proposals

The total costs of my proposals are shown in Table 10.3 below, and the financing is discussed thereafter.

**Table 10.3 Total costs for the proposals 2026–2028 and financing**

Proposal	Cost 2026	Cost 2027	Cost 2028	Existing funds	Source	Need for additional funds
Resource centre					Uo9 4:1 (ap.1)	
	7,600	18,900	18,900	20,000	Uo9 4:7 (ap.11)	8,900
Call support	4,000	10,000	10	(included above)		(included above)
Government grants	0	5,000	5,000	1,620	Uo 9 4:7 (ap.3)	3,380
Travel allowance	15,000	15	15,000	15,000	Uo12 1:4 (ap.1)	0
Research	2,000	2,000	2,000	0		2,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,600</b>	<b>50,900</b>	<b>50,900</b>	<b>36,620</b>		<b>14,280</b>

<sup>22</sup> Prop. 2024/25:1 *Budget proposal for 2025 – Expenditure area 6 Education and research – tetsfotksnsng*, p. 208.

<sup>23</sup> Government Bill 2024/25:60 *Research and innovation for sustainability, innovation and benefit*.  
12 December 2024, p. 111.

<sup>24</sup> Government Bill 2024/25:60 *Footwear and footwear for safety, novelty and utility*.  
12 December 2024, p. 112.

From 2027, the total cost of our proposals for adoption-specific support is estimated at SEK 50.9 million. According to our review above, part of these costs can be financed with existing funds, for example from the MFoF's existing appropriations for international adoption activities and some reallocation of human resources within the agency, as well as funds for adoption-specific support. In addition, funds can be used as Today, funds are allocated for adoption grants and from the current state subsidy to authorised adoption associations for mediation activities. In total, there is SEK 26.6 million that should be available for use in the proposed support measures. In order to fully finance the proposals, an additional 14.3 million Swedish kronor needs to be added. Earlier in this chapter, we discussed how this could be done.

Below, we outline how the various proposals can be financed.

- The proposal for a national resource centre for adopted persons and adoption issues is financed through the MFoF's existing appropriation (Expenditure Area 9, appropriation 4:1, appropriation item 1) and funds from Expenditure Area 9, appropriation 4:7 Contributions to the development of social work, etc., appropriation item 11 Development of social work – part to the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support.
- The proposal for adoption-specific counselling support is financed through continued and increased funds from Expenditure Area 9, appropriation 4:7 Contributions to the development of social work, etc., appropriation item 11 Development of social work – part to the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support.
- The proposal for state subsidies to organisations providing support in tracing origins is financed through the current state subsidy to authorised associations and from Expenditure Area 9, appropriation 4:7 Subsidies for the development of social work, etc., appropriation item 3 Subsidies to organisations in the social sector.
- The proposal for financial assistance for return travel is financed through funds from Expenditure Area 12, appropriation 1:4 Adoption grants, appropriation item 1 Adoption grants.
- The proposal for research on adoptees and adoption is financed through funds from Expenditure Area 9, appropriation 6:2 Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare: Research, appropriation item 1 Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare: Research.

Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare: Research. Alternatively, through funds from Expenditure Area 16, appropriation 3:1, the Swedish Research Council: Research funding and research infrastructure, appropriation item 5, Research funding and research infrastructure.

# 11 Entry into force and transitional provisions

## 11.1 Entry into force

The new provisions in the Social Insurance Code, Section 3 of the Act (1997:191) on Sweden's accession to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, Chapter 24, Section 5,

6, Chapter 30, Section 6 and Chapter 35, Section 1 of the Social Services Act (2025:000)<sup>1</sup>, the Ordinance (1998:562) with certain authorisations for the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Social Services Ordinance (2001:937), the Ordinance (2014:115) containing instructions for foreign representation and Section 4, point 5, Sections 4a and 4b of the Ordinance (2017:292) containing instructions for the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support should enter into force as soon as possible. Some time is needed for referral and preparation within the Government Offices. I propose that the new rules enter into force on 1 September 2026. I propose that the new Ordinance on State Grants for Pilot Projects on Origin Searches for Adopted Persons enter into force on 1 September 2026 and be applied for the first time in relation to grants in 2027.

The new provisions in the Parenting Code, Section 4 of the Act (1997:191) on Sweden's accession to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, the Act (2018:1289) on Adoption in International Situations, Chapter 22, Sections 20 and 21, Chapter 24, Sections 1 and 7 of the Social Services Act (2025:000) Sections 1 and 7 of the Social Services Act (2025:000)<sup>2</sup>, the Ordinance (2008:1239) on State Grants to Authorised Adoption Associations and National Organisations for Adopted Persons, and Sections 3 and 4, Paragraphs 1 and 3 of the Ordinance (2017:292) containing instructions for the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support require a longer preparation period. I propose that the new rules enter into force on 1 January 2029. I

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<sup>1</sup> Latest version prop. 2024/25:89.

<sup>2</sup> Latest wording prop. 2024/25:89.

also propose that the Act (1997:192) on International Adoption Mediation cease to apply on 1 January 2029.

## **11.2 Transitional provisions**

I propose that the repealed Chapter 21 of the Social Insurance Code should continue to apply when assessing applications for adoption grants that have been arranged by an association authorised under the Act (1997:192) on International Adoption Arrangements. This means that adoption grants may be awarded even after

1 September 2026.

I propose transitional provisions in the Act (2018:1289) on Adoption in International Adoptions (LAIS) which means that if the repealed Act (1997:192) on International Adoption Mediation was applicable to the adoption, the adoption must have been carried out in accordance with that Act for a decision referred to in Section 4 of LAIS to apply in Sweden. This means that applicants who have an ongoing adoption process in the child's home country will be able to complete the adoption process and have the adoption automatically recognised in Sweden.

I consider that no transitional provisions are necessary for the other legislative proposals. This means that the new provisions will apply from the date of entry into force.

# 12 Constitutional commentary

## 12.1 Proposed amendment to the Parenting Code

### Chapter 4. Adoption Non-

*international adoption 24 §*

*The provisions of Sections 25–34 shall apply only if the child to be adopted is a national of the country of origin and is to be adopted by a person or persons who are nationals of Sweden.*

The new section specifies the situations in which the provisions of Sections 25–34 apply.

25

*An application for adoption concerning a child who was born or is intended to be born in Sweden for adoption may only be considered if the applicant or applicants have been granted permission to adopt the child in accordance with 26 §.*

*The provision on the international jurisdiction of Swedish courts is found in the Act (2018:1289) on adoption and international cooperation.*

This new paragraph sets out certain conditions under which the court may consider an application for adoption. The considerations are set out in section 8.10.5.

The provision in *the first paragraph* applies if the application concerns a child under the age of 18 who has been brought or is intended to be brought to Sweden for adoption. This means that either the child is still abroad at the time of the application or the child has already been brought to Sweden. If the child has come to Sweden for a purpose other than adoption, for example to visit relatives, to study or as an asylum seeker, the paragraph does not apply. According to

Under this provision, the application may only be considered if the Family Law and Parental Support Authority has granted permission for the adoption of a child from abroad in accordance with Chapter 4, Section 26 of the Parenting Code. The applicant should be required to submit a copy of the decision. If the applicant or applicants have not been granted permission to adopt, the court shall reject the application for adoption.

*The second paragraph* notes that provisions on the international jurisdiction of Swedish courts are found in the Act (2018:1289) on Adoption in International Situations.

26 §

*The person or persons who wish to adopt a child whose home country is Sweden must apply for a permit from the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support.*

The new paragraph introduces a requirement for permission from the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support in order to adopt a child whose original home is in another country. The considerations are set out in section 8.10.3.

2/ §

*Permission for adoption from the country of origin may be granted if the child is related to the applicant or the applicant's adoptive child, or if there are other reasons related to the personal relationship between the applicant and the child that justify the adoption.*

*Permission may be granted on the condition that*

*t. the other country has an adoption law or other legal provisions governing intercountry adoption, which takes into account the fundamental principles of intercountry adoption as expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993 and the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1987*

*2. the second country has a well-established administrative system for adoption activities,*

*3. taking into account the circumstances, it is considered appropriate to carry out a national adoption from the country, and*

*4. the applicant has been granted permission in accordance with Chapter 24 of the Social Services Act (2025:000)<sup>1</sup> and the adoption, taking into account all circumstances, can be assumed to be in the best interests of the child.*

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<sup>1</sup> Latest wording prop. 2024/25:89.

The new paragraph specifies the conditions under which the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support may grant permission to adopt a child whose original home is in another country. The considerations are set out in section 8.10.3.

According to *the first paragraph*, permission to adopt a child whose original home is in another country may only be granted if the child is related to the applicants or related to the applicants' adopted children, i.e. a biological (full or half) sibling of a child who has previously been adopted by the applicant. Permission to adopt should also be granted in cases where there is otherwise a close personal relationship between the child and the applicant that has not arisen for the purpose of adoption.

According to *the second paragraph*, the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support shall assess both the reliability of the adoption procedure and whether the adoption is in the best interests of the child. The assessment of whether the procedure is reliable corresponds to the assessment currently made in connection with foreign authorisation under Section 6a, points 1 and 2, of the Act (1997:192) on International Adoption Services (cf. Government Bill 2003/04:131, p. 38 f). Point 1 means that the country must have legislation or regulations that, among other things, ensure that an assessment of whether the child has the opportunity to grow up in good living conditions in its country of origin is carried out before the child becomes available for international adoption. Point 2 means that it must be ensured that the child's situation is adequately investigated before a decision is made that the child is available for adoption and may be adopted abroad. It must also be clear who is to make this decision. There must also be stability in the administration. When assessing whether the adoption can be assumed to be in the best interests of the child, in addition to the general provisions in Chapter 4, Sections 1–10 of the Parenting Code, particular consideration must be given to whether the child lacks a secure upbringing environment in its biological family or with another caregiver in the child's home country and that the competent authority has assessed that the child lacks a secure upbringing environment in its biological family or with another caregiver in the child's home country. Sections 1–10 of the Parenting Code, particular consideration must be given to the fact that the child lacks a secure upbringing environment in his or her biological family or with another caregiver in the child's home country, and that the competent authorities in the child's home country have assessed that the child is in need of adoption and that the necessary consents to the adoption have been obtained. The decision should clearly state which aspects the Family Law and Parental Support Authority considered relevant in assessing the best interests of the child. It is important that the adopted person can subsequently see what efforts were made to obtain his or her views and that those views were important when the adoption application was considered. If the decision does not correspond to the child's views, the reason for this should be clearly stated.

28 ¢

*In matters concerning the conditions for international adoption, the Authority for Family and Child Welfare Support shall consult with the Swedish country authority in the other country, unless it is clearly unnecessary, and, where necessary, with the family and child welfare services in the other country.*

The new paragraph partly corresponds to the current Section 6a, third paragraph, of the Act (1997:192) on International Adoption Services (cf. Government Bill 2003/04:131, pp. 42 and 82). The considerations are set out in section 8.10.3.

The Family Law and Parental Support Authority shall consult with the Swedish embassy or consulate in the child's home country unless this is clearly unnecessary. This may involve, for example, obtaining up-to-date information on legislation and how the administration of international adoptions works in that country. It may also involve requesting assistance in investigating the relationship between the applicant and the child, for example through DNA testing. The Swedish foreign authority may also assist in providing a general picture of the situation for children in the country, which may be relevant to the assessment of whether the adoption is in the best interests of the child. In this context, it may be obvious that the authority has recently been in contact with the Swedish foreign authority in the other country in another matter and has thereby obtained reliable and up-to-date information. If necessary, the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support shall also contact children's rights organisations operating in the country to obtain a more general picture of the situation of children in the country.

29 ¢

*The assessment referred to in 26 ¢ shall be made before the child leaves the country.*

The new paragraph stipulates that the Family Law and Parental Support Authority must conduct its assessment before the child leaves the country of origin. The provision corresponds to Section 4 of the Act (1997:192) on International Adoption Services (cf. Government Bill 1996/97:91, pp. 50 and 79). The considerations are set out in section 8.10.3.

If no such decision has been made when the child leaves the country of origin, the adoption shall not automatically become valid in Sweden, see the explanatory memorandum to Section 5 of the Act (2018:1289) on Adoption in International Situations.

the commentary on Section 5 of the Act (2018:1289) on Adoption in International Situations.

### 30 §

*A decision on permission for intercountry adoption shall, unless there are special reasons, be made within one month of the application being received.*

The new paragraph regulates the time within which the Family Law and Parental Support Authority must make a decision on permission to adopt a child whose original home is in another country. The considerations are set out in section 8.10.3

Unless there are special reasons, the decision must be made within three months of the application being submitted. If there are special reasons, the Family Law and Parental Support Authority may decide to extend the investigation for a certain period of time. Special reasons for extending the investigation period may include, for example, difficulties in contacting foreign authorities or the need for the applicants to supplement their application.

### 3t §

*A decision on permission for international adoption shall remain in force as long as the applicant has a spouse in accordance with Chapter 24 of the Social Services Act (2025:000).<sup>2</sup>*

*The person or persons who wish to adopt are obliged to notify the authority responsible for family and parental support if the circumstances change significantly during the period of validity of the permit.*

*A decision on a permit for international adoption shall be revoked if the conditions for it no longer exist.*

The new paragraph regulates the period of validity of a permit for international adoption. The considerations are set out in section 8.10.3.

According to *the first paragraph*, the permit is valid as long as the applicant has consent in accordance with Chapter 24, Section 1 of the Social Services Act (2025:000).<sup>3</sup> If the social welfare committee's consent expires before the person who has been granted a permit for international adoption has taken the child into their care and the person still wishes to adopt, they must submit a new application for international adoption.

<sup>2</sup> Latest wording prop. 2024/25:89.

<sup>3</sup> Latest wording prop. 2024/25:89.

According to *the second paragraph*, the person or persons wishing to adopt are obliged to inform the Family Law and Parental Support Authority if the circumstances change significantly during the period of validity of the permit. This may, for example, concern changes in the applicant's or the child's life situation. It may also be that there is no longer an acceptable procedure for adoptions from the country in question or that there are suspicions of irregularities.

*The third paragraph* contains provisions on the revocation of the permit if the conditions for it no longer exist.

32 §

*Once a decision has been made that a child is to be handed over for adoption to the prospective adoptive parents in the country of origin, the Authority for Family and Parenting Support shall, without delay and no later than two weeks after the prospective adoptive parent or parents have submitted a notification to this effect, seek consent to allow the adoption to proceed.*

*The period during which consent is to be sought may be extended if there are special reasons for doing so.*

*The authority responsible for family and foster care support shall notify the social welfare committee that has given its consent in accordance with Chapter 24 of the Social Services Act (2025:000)<sup>4</sup> that consent has been given for the adoption proceedings to continue.*

This new section contains provisions on consent to the adoption procedure continuing in accordance with Article 17(c) of the 1993 Hague Convention. The section means that the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support takes over the responsibility under Chapter 24, Section 5 of the Social Services Act (2025:000)<sup>5</sup> (previously Chapter 6, Section 14 of the Social Services Act) from the social welfare committee (cf. Government Bill 2000/01:80, p. 167, and Government Bill 1996/97:91, p. 81 ff.). The considerations are set out in section 8.10.4.

The assessment referred to in *the first paragraph* includes ensuring that all documentation concerning the child is available and that the adoption documents are authentic. The Family Law and Parental Support Authority shall carefully review all adoption documents, particularly with regard to the child's identity, consent, the child's adoptability and the considerations made regarding the principle of subsidiarity. If there are ambiguities in the child's documentation, consent should not be granted without further investigation.

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<sup>4</sup> Latest wording prop. 2024/25:89.

<sup>5</sup> Latest wording prop. 2024/25:89.

According to *the second paragraph*, the period within which the examination is to take place may be extended if there are special reasons for doing so. Special reasons may include, for example, the need to supplement the case or to translate documents.

*The third paragraph* imposes an obligation on the Family Law and Parental Support Authority to notify the social welfare committee that it has decided that the adoption procedure may continue. The notification shall be made to the social welfare committee that has given its consent in accordance with Chapter 24, Section 1 of the Social Services Act (2025:000)<sup>6</sup>(previously Chapter 6, Section 12 of the Social Services Act). The obligation to notify means that confidentiality is breached in accordance with Chapter 10, Section 28 of the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act (2009:400). The social services committee shall then contact the prospective adoptive parents to plan how and when follow-up contact shall be made after the child has been received in the applicant's home.

33 φ

*Decisions pursuant to Section 26, third paragraph, and Section 32, first paragraph, may be appealed to the general administrative court. Permission to appeal is granted by the chamber court.*

*Decisions made by the Family Court and the Parental Support Authority may not be appealed.*

The new section contains provisions on which decisions by the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support may be appealed. The considerations are set out in sections 8.10.3 and 8.10.4. The section corresponds to section 14, first (in part) and third paragraphs, of the Act (1997:192) on international adoption mediation (cf. Government Bill 1996/97:91, pp. 80 and 84).

According to *the first paragraph*, decisions by the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support concerning authorisation for international adoption, revocation of authorisation for international adoption and consent for the adoption procedure to continue may be appealed to a general administrative court.

According to *the second paragraph*, decisions by the Family Law and Parental Support Authority may not be appealed in other respects.

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<sup>6</sup> Latest wording in Government Bill 2024/25:89.

34 ¢

*Anyone who has been granted permission to adopt a child from a country other than their country of residence shall be liable to a fine.*

According to the new paragraph, anyone who adopts a child from another country without permission from the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support may be sentenced to a fine. The paragraph corresponds to section 15, second sentence, of the Act (1997:192) on International Adoption Services (cf. Prop. 1996/97:91, p. 81).

The considerations are set out in section 8.10.3.

## **12.2 Proposed amendment to the Social Insurance Code**

### **Chapter 5. Residence-based benefits**

9

Persons residing in Sweden are insured for the following benefits: Section B Family benefits

1. parental allowance at the minimum and basic levels (Chapters 11 and 12)
2. child allowance (Chapters 15 and 16)
3. maintenance support (Chapters 17–19)
4. *childcare allowance* (Chapter 21)
5. care allowance (Chapter 22)

Section C Benefits in the event of illness or occupational injury

6. sickness benefit in special cases (Chapter 28a)
7. rehabilitation, contributions to work aids, special contributions and rehabilitation allowance in special cases (Chapters 29–31a)
8. sickness compensation and activity compensation in the form of guaranteed compensation (Chapters 33 and 35–37)

Section D Special benefits for persons with disabilities

9. compensation for additional costs, (Chapter 50)
10. assistance allowance, (Chapter 51)

11. car support (Chapter 52)

Section E Benefits for old age

12. guarantee pension (Chapters 55, 56, 65–67 and 69–71)
13. special pension supplement, (Chapter 73)

14. elderly support allowance (Chapter 74)

Section F Benefits for survivors

15. survivor's support, (Chapters 77, 79 and 85)

16. guarantee pension to transition pension (Chapters 77, 81 and 85)

Section G Housing support

17. housing allowance (Chapters 95–98)

18. housing supplement, and (Chapters 100–103)
19. housing allowance. (Sections 103a–103e)

This section regulates which benefits are residence-based. The fourth paragraph is amended so that adoption grants are replaced by grants for tracing one's origins. The amendment is due to Chapter 21 on adoption grants ceasing to apply and being replaced by a new Chapter 21 on grants for tracing one's origins. The considerations are set out in section 9.12.

## Chapter 20. Contents

*t ç*

This subsection contains provisions on

- *bsdtag tsll rtsprngssöksnsg* in Chapter 21, and
- care allowance in Chapter 22.

The section specifies the types of benefits regulated by the provisions of subsection V. The section is amended so that the adoption allowance benefit is replaced by the new benefit for tracing one's origins. The considerations are found in section 9.12.

## Chapter 21. Grant for tracing one's origins

*t ç*

*This chapter contains provisions on the right to a grant for tracing origins for adopted persons.*

This new paragraph states that the chapter contains provisions on grants for adopted persons to search for their origins. The considerations are set out in section 9.12.

*2 ç*

*A decision on a request for information about origins may be submitted to the person over the age of 18 who was adopted from the country of origin to Sweden by someone with their home in Sweden. The decision shall be submitted with a maximum of 25 per cent of the base amount for the request to the country of origin.*

The new paragraph stipulates that persons who have been adopted from another country to Sweden may apply to the Swedish Social Insurance Agency for a grant to search for their origins. The considerations are set out in section 9.12.

Contributions for tracing one's origins are granted to persons over the age of 18 who have been adopted from abroad to Sweden by someone residing in Sweden. The contribution consists of a travel allowance for a trip to the adopted person's country of origin. The travel allowance is granted for the costs of a return trip to the adopted person's country of origin and amounts to a maximum of 25 per cent of the price base amount.

The maximum amount of the grant may only be paid once per adopted person, but it is possible to apply for it at any time after the adopted person has reached the age of 18.

### 3 §

*In order for a subsidy for origin tracing to be granted, the application for the subsidy must be submitted within one year of the tracing being carried out.*

The new paragraph stipulates that grants for origin searches shall be paid in arrears against a statement of expenses. In order for a grant for an origin search to be paid, the application for the grant must be made within one year of the return journey being completed. The applicant must be able to present a copy of the adoption decision or another document proving the adoption. The considerations are found in section 9.12.2.

### 4 §

*A grant for tracing the origins of an adopted child is only available to those who have been adopted in accordance with a decision by a Swedish court.*

*With a decision by a Swedish court,*

*a decision on adoption issued in a foreign country that is valid in Sweden in accordance with the Act (1999:199) on Sweden's accession to the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption,*

*2. a decision on adoption issued in a foreign country that applies to Sweden in accordance with the Act (20t8:t289) on adoption and international adoption,*

*3. a foreign country has notified a decision on adoption that applies to Switzerland in accordance with the Act (t9/t:/96) on international adoption, and*

*4. a foreign country has issued a decision on adoption that applies to Sweden in accordance with the Act (1904:26 s.t.) on certain international legal relationships concerning marriage and guardianship.*

The new paragraph specifies the type of adoption for which a grant for tracing one's origins is provided. The considerations are set out in section 9.12.2.

According to *the first paragraph*, grants for tracing one's origins shall be provided to persons who have been adopted pursuant to a decision by a Swedish court.

It follows from *the second paragraph* that contributions to the search for origins shall also be paid to persons whose foreign adoption decisions have been recognised in Sweden pursuant to the Act (1997:191) on Sweden's accession to the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, the Act (2018:1289) on Adoption in International Situations, the Act (1971:796) on International Legal Relations concerning Adoption or the Act (1904:26 s.1) on Certain International Legal Relations concerning Marriage and Guardianship.

Contributions for origin searches are not provided to persons who have been adopted in another Nordic country or who have been adopted in the adoptive parents' country of residence at the time. The grant covers adoptions arranged through an authorised adoption organisation as well as private and individual adoptions.

5 ¢

*The application for adoption shall only be submitted to the person who has been adopted before the age of 18.*

*The application shall not be submitted to a person who has been adopted by a relative or by the spouse or cohabiting partner of a parent.*

The new paragraph contains provisions that limit the right to a grant for tracing one's origins. The considerations are set out in section 9.12.2.

*The first paragraph* states that grants are only provided to persons who were adopted before the age of 18.

According to *the second paragraph*, grants are not provided to persons who have been adopted by a relative or by a parent's spouse or cohabiting partner.

## Chapter 112. Decisions

4 ¢

Interim decisions on compensation pursuant to Sections 2 and 3 may not be made in cases concerning *applications for disability pension*, car allowance or special pension supplement.

Interim decisions pursuant to Section 2 may not be made in cases concerning general old-age pensions, income pension supplements, survivor's pensions or survivor's support.

Interim decisions pursuant to Section 3 may not be made in cases concerning assistance compensation.

This section regulates the situations in which the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Swedish Pensions Agency may not make interim decisions. The considerations are set out in section 9.12.

It follows from *the first paragraph* that interim decisions on grants for tracing origins, car support or special pension supplements, which are one-off payments, are not possible.

The *second and third* paragraphs remain unchanged.

## 12.3 Proposed amendment to the Act (1997:191) due to Sweden's accession to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption

3 ¢

Applications referred to in Article 14 of the Convention *shall* be made to the Social Welfare Board in the applicant's or applicants' municipality of residence.

The Social Welfare Board *shall*

- a) compile reports in accordance with Article 15.1 of the Convention,
- b) take measures in accordance with Article 21 of the Convention.

*Chapter 24, section 4 of the Social Services Act (2025:000) contains provisions stipulating that the Social Services Committee shall decide on the adoption of children from their country of origin.*

This section regulates which tasks under Articles 14–21 of the 1993 Hague Convention are to be performed by the social welfare committee (cf. Government Bill 1996/97:91, p. 76). The considerations are set out in section 8.10.4.

In *the first paragraph*, a linguistic change is made by replacing "shall" with "shall."

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<sup>7</sup> Latest wording in Government Bill 2024/25:89.

In the second paragraph, the task of examining questions of consent under Article 17(c) of the Convention is removed. Point (c) becomes point (b). Furthermore, a linguistic change is made by replacing "shall" with "ska".

In *the third paragraph*, the reference to Chapter 6, Sections 12–15 of the current Social Services Act (2001:453) is replaced by a reference to the corresponding provisions in the new Social Services Act (2025:000), latest wording Prop. 2024/25:89. Furthermore, a linguistic change is made by replacing utomlands with i utlandet.

## **12.4    Proposal for an Act amending the Act (2018:1289) on adoption in international situations**

5 §

*If Chapter 4, Sections 26–31 §§ of the Adoption Act are applicable to the adoption, it is stipulated that the adoption must have been carried out in accordance with the provisions for a decision referred to in Section 4 § to be valid in Sweden.*

If there are exceptional reasons, the authority designated by the Government may approve that the decision shall apply in Sweden even though the conditions in the first paragraph are not met.

This section contains special provisions on the recognition of certain adoption decisions concerning children (cf. Government Bill 2017/18:121, p. 168 ff.).

*The first paragraph*, which is new, states that in cases where a minor residing abroad is to be adopted by one or more persons residing in Sweden, there must be a valid decision on permission for international adoption in accordance with Chapter 4, Sections 26–31 of the Parenting Code from the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support before the child leaves the country of origin. If no such decision has been made, the adoption shall not automatically become valid in Sweden.

*The second paragraph* remains unchanged.

## 12.5 Proposed amendment to the Social Services Act (2025:000)

### Chapter 22 Care of children and young people outside their own home

20

No one may, without the support of this Act, engage in activities aimed at placing children in foster homes, emergency homes or other private homes as referred to in Sections 2 and 4.

*The first paragraph also applies to the placement of children for adoption.*

The paragraph contains a prohibition against activities aimed at placing children in foster homes, emergency homes and other private homes (cf. Government Bill 2000/01:80, p. 167, and Government Bill 1979/80:1, Part A, pp. 543 and 544). The considerations are found in section 8.10.2.

*The first paragraph* is unchanged.

*The second paragraph*, which is new, states that no one may place children for adoption without the support of this Act. The placement of children for adoption refers to activities aimed at establishing contact between the person or persons wishing to adopt and the authorities, organisations, institutions or individuals in the country where the child is resident.

2t φ

Anyone who disregards the provision in Section 2, first paragraph, shall be sentenced to a fine. Anyone who disregards the provision in Section 20 shall also be sentenced to a fine.

Public prosecution for offences referred to in the first paragraph may only be brought with the consent of the National Board of Health and Welfare.

This section contains provisions on penalties and prosecution for anyone who violates the prohibition against conducting activities aimed at placing children in private homes. The considerations are found in section 8.10.2.

In *the first paragraph*, the reference to the Act (1997:192) on Inter-National Adoption Mediation is removed because the first sentence of Section 15 of that Act is moved to Chapter 22, Section 20 of this Act. The second sentence of the first paragraph corresponds to the first sentence of Section 15 of the Act (1997:192) on Intercountry Adoption (cf. Government Bill 1996/97:91, p. 81).

*The second paragraph* remains unchanged.

## Chapter 24. International adoptions

1.1

A child residing abroad may not be taken in for the purpose of adoption without the consent of the social welfare committee. Consent must be given before the child leaves the country where he or she resides.

The social services committee may give its consent if the applicant is suitable for adoption. The committee shall make an overall assessment of the applicant's suitability and, in its assessment, shall take particular account of

- the applicant's knowledge and understanding of adopted children and their needs and the implications of the planned adoption,
- the applicant's personal characteristics and social network,
- the applicant's age and state of health, and
- the stability of the relationship, if consent is sought from spouses or cohabiting partners.

*The applicant's suitability shall be assessed in relation to the individual case.*

*The adopted child must also be deemed to be in the best interests of the child.*

This section contains requirements and conditions for the social welfare committee's consent to adopt a child residing abroad (cf. Government Bill 2000/01:80, p. 167, and Government Bill 2017/18:121, p. 175 ff). The considerations are found in section 8.10.3.

*The first and second paragraphs* remain unchanged.

The provision in *the third paragraph* is amended on the basis that permission for international adoption may only be granted if the child is related to the applicant or the applicant's adoptive child or if there is a special reason for adoption in view of the personal relationship between the applicant and the child. The applicant's suitability must therefore always be assessed in relation to the specific child that the applicant intends to adopt.

2.1

Consent under Section 1 shall be given by the social welfare committee in the municipality which, under Chapter 29, is responsible for measures for the applicant or applicants.

The social welfare committee that has given *consent pursuant to* 1.1 shall fulfil the obligations pursuant to Chapter 22, Section 8 and Section 10, first paragraph.

This section contains provisions on which social welfare committee is responsible for certain decisions and for fulfilling certain obligations during an adoption procedure. The considerations are found in section 8.10.4.

In *the first paragraph*, consent under Section 5 is removed because the Social Services Committee's responsibility to assess whether the adoption process may continue is transferred to the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support.

*The second paragraph* states that it is the social welfare committee that has given its consent under Section 1 that is responsible for the child's situation before a decision on adoption has been made (Chapter 22, Section 8 of the new Social Services Act,<sup>8</sup> previously Chapter 6, Section 1 of the Social Services Act) and follow up on the child's situation after the decision on adoption has been made (Chapter 22, Section 10 of the new Social Services Act,<sup>9</sup> previously Chapter 5, Section 1, point 9 of the Social Services Act). Cf. Government Bill

2000/01:80 p. 167, Government Bill 2010/11:49 p. 90 and Government Bill 1979/80 p. 542 f.

/¢

*Chapter 4, sections 24–32 of the Swedish Parent and Child Code contain provisions on permission to adopt a child from abroad.*

The section states that there are provisions on permission for international adoption in the Parenting Code. The considerations are found in section 8.10.3.

### **Chapter 30. Organisation of the social welfare committee and delegation of decision-making powers**

6

The social welfare committee may only delegate decision-making authority to a committee in matters concerning

1. care, nursing and upbringing in a family home, emergency home or other private home in accordance with Chapter 22, Sections 2 and 4
2. consideration of continued care, the focus and design of the care, and whether there are grounds for applying for a transfer of custody in accordance with Chapter 22, Sections 13 and 14
3. consideration of a prohibition on moving pursuant to Chapter 22, Section 16,
4. placement across national borders pursuant to Chapter 22, Sections 17 and 18,
5. international adoption pursuant to Chapter 24, Sections 1, 2 and 4, or
6. decisions pursuant to Chapter 33, Section 4, to bring an action for recovery pursuant to Chapter 33, Section 1.

This section contains provisions stipulating that decision-making authority in certain matters under the Act may only be delegated to committees. The considerations are set out in section 8.10.4.

*The first and second paragraphs* are unchanged.

The provision in *the third paragraph* concerning matters relating to refusal to consent to the continuation of adoption proceedings under Chapter 24, Section 5, is taken

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<sup>8</sup> Latest wording prop. 2024/25:89.

<sup>9</sup> Latest wording, Government Bill 2024/25:89.

removed because the social welfare committee's responsibility to assess consent to continued adoption proceedings is transferred to the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support.

## Chapter 35. Appeals

*t φ*

The social welfare committee's decision may be appealed to a general administrative court in matters concerning

1. measures under Chapter 11, Section 1 or Chapter 12, Section 1,
2. refusal or reduction of maintenance support under Chapter 12, Section 5,
3. prohibition or restriction on taking in other people's children under Chapter 18, Section 11,
4. consent to take in a child under Chapter 22, Section 2,
5. consent to adoption pursuant to Chapter 24, Section 1,
6. revocation of consent to adoption pursuant to Chapter 24, Section 4,
7. application for measures in another municipality pursuant to Chapter 29, Section 7, and
8. fees or reserved amounts pursuant to Chapter 32, Sections 5–10.

This section regulates which decisions by the social welfare committee may be appealed to a general administrative court. The considerations are found in section 8.10.4.

*The reference to Chapter 24, Section 5 is removed because the social welfare committee's responsibility to assess consent to continue the adoption process is transferred to the Authority for Family Law and Parental Support.*



# Committee Directive 2021:95

## **Sweden's international adoption activities – lessons learned and the way forward**

Decision at the Government meeting on 28 October 2021

### **Summary**

A special investigator will map and analyse how regulations, organisation and processes within Sweden's international adoption activities have functioned in the past and up to the present day. The purpose of the assignment is to clarify the existence of any irregularities in Sweden's international adoption activities and how the government, relevant state authorities, municipalities, authorised associations, non-profit organisations and other private actors have acted and responded to any irregularities based on the respective actor's responsibility and role. The findings of the investigation will provide guidance for the development of Sweden's international adoption activities by proposing how the current regulations, organisation and processes can be changed and strengthened in order to further strengthen the child rights perspective and legal certainty.

The investigator shall, among other things

- investigate the need for adoption-specific support and propose what assistance and support measures should be offered, and
- propose the necessary legislative changes and other measures.

The assignment shall be reported by 7 November 2023 at the latest.

## International adoption

An international adoption, also known as a transnational adoption, refers to a child who is resident abroad. Adoption means that a child who has no parents or other person who is able to care for them is given a new family and a new sense of belonging. Under Swedish law, adoption is a definitive decision that creates a family law relationship between the adopted child and the adoptive parent.

Sweden's international adoption activities refer here to all forms of adoption mediation that exist and have existed since the mid-20th century, as well as various forms of private/individual adoption where no actual mediation takes place. This also includes the responsibility of the state and municipalities in matters of international adoption.

To ensure the rights of the child in international adoption, there is a comprehensive international and Swedish regulatory framework. The procedure for international adoptions is governed by international conventions to which Sweden has acceded, as well as by foreign and Swedish legislation. The main provisions on international adoption are found in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Children's Convention), the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the 1993 Hague Convention), the Parenting Code, the Social Services Act (2001:453), the Act (1997:192) on International Adoption and the Act (1997:191) on Sweden's accession to the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption.

The starting point for international adoption is the best interests of the child and the child's rights. An important part of the child rights perspective is the principle of subsidiarity, which means that it is considered best for a child to grow up in their biological family or with relatives in their country of origin. If this is not possible, the child should be offered another family in their country of origin through national adoption, and only if this is not possible should the child be offered a permanent family through international adoption.

The goal of Sweden's children's rights policy is that children and young people should be respected and given the opportunity for development and security, as well as participation and influence (Govt. Bill 2008/09:1, Committee Report 2008/09:SoU1, Riksdag Communication 2008/09:127). This goal is based, among other things, on the commitments Sweden has made by ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child and aims to promote and protect the rights and interests of children in society. The goal means

that all children should have their rights met, regardless of age, gender and disability, among other things.

On 1 January 2020, the Convention on the Rights of the Child became law in Sweden. Among other things, this means that anyone applying provisions in Swedish law must interpret them in relation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Government Bill 2017/18:186, p. 74). According to the Convention, States Parties that recognise and/or permit adoption shall ensure that the best interests of the child are given paramount importance.

### *The adoption process*

There are three main actors in Swedish international adoption: municipal social welfare committees, authorised associations and the Swedish Authority for Family Law and Parental Support (MFoF). In addition, district courts play an important role in cases where the decision on adoption is made in Sweden. The actors involved have different tasks and responsibilities in the adoption process. While municipal social welfare committees are responsible for investigating whether applicants are suitable for adoption, authorised associations act as intermediaries. The associations are non-profit organisations. The MFoF is the Swedish central authority for international adoptions and is responsible for providing guidance and supervising and authorising the associations.

As a general rule, anyone wishing to adopt a child from abroad must use an authorised association. However, this does not apply in individual cases of adoption involving relatives or when there are other special reasons for adopting without the involvement of an authorised association, known as private adoption. In such cases, MFoF must assess whether the procedure is acceptable before the child leaves the country. This means that the mediation method must be reliable and that the process in the country must be conducted in an ethically correct manner.

An authorised association may be granted authorisation to work with international adoption mediation in another country, provided that the other country has adoption legislation or other reliable regulations governing international adoption that take into account the fundamental principles of international adoption as expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1993 Hague Convention.

*The development of international adoption in Sweden*

International adoptions of children began in Sweden in the 1950s, and from the outset the activity was carried out by private individuals. From the mid-1950s until 1965, the National Board of Health and Welfare was responsible for mediating contact between prospective adoptive parents and foreign agencies. Between 1965 and 1979, the National Board of Health and Welfare was responsible for arranging international adoptions. At the same time, so-called private adoptions were carried out without the National Board of Health and Welfare acting as an intermediary. These took place without the state or municipalities having any insight into the mediation process. In 1969, the first two non-profit organisations in Sweden were formed for the purpose of arranging adoptions. In the 1970s, 40–50 per cent of the children who came to Sweden were arranged through private contacts (Government Bill 1996/97:91, p. 42 f.).

In order to take a more coordinated approach to adoption activities, an advisory committee was established within the National Board of Health and Welfare in 1971, which was reorganised in 1974 into the Board for International Adoption Issues (NIA). The NIA was responsible for processing applications for the adoption of foreign children until 1979, when this activity ceased in connection with the reform of international adoption services. Since then, this task has been carried out by authorised associations. The purpose of the reform was to bring all mediation under state control and to reduce the risk of children coming to Sweden by illegal or inappropriate means.

Private adoptions declined as a result of the reform. However, it had been noted that private mediation could take place in inappropriate forms or for questionable purposes (SOU 2009:61 p. 203). The NIA had noted, among other things, that in connection with such adoptions, it could be unclear how the child had been given up for adoption in their home country, who the child's guardian was, and whether money had been paid for the child. In order to further strengthen the regulations for international adoption mediation, new rules were introduced in 1985 which meant that the social services, in addition to assessing the suitability of applicants to adopt, would also assess the suitability of the mediation channel that the applicants intended to use. This reform also led to a decrease in the number of private adoptions. In 1986, almost 90 per cent of adopted children came to Sweden through authorised associations (Government Bill 1996/97:91, p. 45).

*1993 The Hague Convention – a milestone FOR international adoption*

At the end of the 1980s, several international forums noted that the number of international adoptions had increased in many countries since the end of the 1960s and that this had given rise to many complex issues. The issue of irregularities in international adoptions was discussed within the UN and the Council of Europe. It was considered that there was a need for legally binding rules and a system of cooperation between countries. The result was the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, adopted in The Hague on 29 May 1993. The purpose of the Convention is to ensure that international adoptions are carried out in a safe, legal and ethical manner. Furthermore, it is fundamental to the Convention that states are responsible for ensuring that the best interests of the child are taken into account in every part of the adoption process. Sweden ratified the Convention in 1997 and it applies as Swedish law.

In connection with Sweden's accession to the 1993 Hague Convention, a number of changes were also made to Swedish adoption legislation. Among other things, the possibilities for adoption without the mediation of an authorised association were significantly restricted. Since 1998, the social services committee has also had a special responsibility to meet the specific needs for support and assistance that may exist for adoptees and their families after an adoption case has been decided. In order to make it easier for adoptees to research their origins and learn about the circumstances surrounding their adoption, an obligation was introduced in 2005 for authorised organisations to document their mediation activities. All handling of cases concerning individuals must be documented, including information that does not directly concern an individual adoption case. This may, for example, concern the association's contacts abroad in a particular country (Govt Bill 2003/04:131, p. 46). At the same time, a right was introduced for adoptees to access information concerning their own adoption case.

In 2005, it also became mandatory for prospective adoptive parents to undergo parental training in order to obtain consent for adoption. Furthermore, stricter and clearer conditions were introduced for an association to be authorised to mediate international adoptions. The conditions were further tightened in 2009. This means that, in addition to an assessment of the adoption agencies for authorisation, the agencies must also be assessed on the basis of their ability to ensure that the children they place are well cared for.

Authorisation also applies to countries, parts of countries or adoption contacts through which the associations may place children.

*The number of international ADOPTIONS HAS increased*

Over the past 10–15 years, international adoption has undergone a major change, with the number of international adoptions worldwide declining sharply. At the beginning of the 2000s, around 1,000 children came to Sweden each year through authorised associations, but in recent years the number has fallen to less than 200 adoptions per year. In total, around 60,000 international adoptions have been carried out in Sweden to date.

**Information about irregularities and shortcomings in international adoption activities**

In international adoption, irregularity is described as something that can take various forms, ranging from illegal adoption, i.e. adoption that is the result of abuse such as abduction, sale, human trafficking and other illegal activities, to various forms of unethical or inappropriate behaviour by various participants in the process (Hague Conference on Private International Law, the implementation and Operation of the 1993 Hague Intercountry Adoption Convention: Guide to good practice. Guide No 1. 2008). The line between illegal adoption and other irregularities can be difficult to draw. International conventions and national laws have been developed to prevent irregularities in international adoptions. A fundamental purpose of the 1993 Hague Convention is to establish a system of cooperation among the contracting states to, among other things, prevent the abduction, sale or trafficking of children.

Since 2018, a criminal investigation has been underway in Chile into the abduction of children and irregularities in international adoptions from the country during the 1970s and 1990s. As a result of the investigation, the Chilean Parliament appointed a commission to investigate the actions of state organisations in adoption procedures, the registration of minors and the control of their departure from the country. The commission's report includes testimonies from women whose children

were adopted nationally and internationally, and from adoptees. The investigation has shown that children were taken from their parents through various methods in order to be adopted, and that financial interests were the driving force.

Chile's criminal investigation into international adoptions and other reports concerning irregularities in several other countries of origin have led to an extensive debate in Sweden about Sweden's role and responsibility for irregularities that have occurred historically, both in Chile and in other countries of origin. Several adoptees have also come forward and told their stories.

Similar debates and experiences exist in several other countries, and some of these countries have also investigated the occurrence of irregularities in international adoptions. In the Netherlands, a committee has investigated the role and responsibility of the state and intermediary parties in international adoptions during the period 1967–1998, as well as the occurrence of irregularities, with a focus on adoptions from Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The committee, which presented its report in February 2021, found, among other things, that irregularities had occurred in all of the countries of origin investigated, both on a large scale and systematically. The irregularities included child trafficking, exploitation of poor mothers, forged documents and lost archive documents. In addition, the committee studied adoptions from a further 18 countries of origin, as well as the period before 1967 and after 1998. The committee found that irregularities had been reported from all the countries surveyed and that irregularities had continued to occur even after the Netherlands ratified the 1993 Hague Convention.

In February 2020, the Government commissioned the Swedish Agency for Public Management to review the organisation of international adoption activities in Sweden. In its report, which was presented in January 2021, the Swedish National Financial Management Authority states that international adoptions have gradually become safer and more secure, both for the children and for those who adopt them. At the same time, the Swedish National Financial Management Authority considers that there are risks involved in adoption activities, for example with regard to the adoption legislation of the countries of origin and how it is applied. The Swedish National Audit Office also points out that there are risks associated with how well the countries of origin document how they have investigated the child's background and conditions for international adoption (Swedish National Audit Office, 2021:1, The organisation of international adoption activities, p. 81 f.).

Adoptee interest groups in Sweden have called for an independent government inquiry to clarify whether international adoptions to Sweden have been carried out in a legally secure and ethical manner, based on the best interests of the child. Furthermore, there are calls to investigate the Swedish government's responsibility if the inquiry reveals that irregularities have occurred. Several interest groups have emphasised the need for accessible and legally secure DNA testing for adoptees and their biological families when searching for their origins. Adopted persons' interest groups have also called for an investigation into the nationalisation of international adoption activities.

### **The task of investigating certain issues concerning Sweden's international adoption activities**

#### *Possible occurrence of IRREGULARITIES*

The reports of irregularities or suspected irregularities in international adoption practices are worrying. The states concerned are responsible for ensuring legal certainty and the best interests of the child in every part of the adoption process.

In order to investigate whether irregularities have occurred or are occurring in Sweden's international adoption activities, a survey and comprehensive review must be carried out of how regulations, organisation and processes have looked and functioned in the past and up to the present day. A survey and review of the responsibilities and roles of various actors is also needed. It is important that the survey highlights the historical development of adoption agencies and how their organisation and working methods have functioned in practice. The question of whether the actors involved have had the right conditions to fulfil their responsibilities or roles is also an important part of the analysis. It is also important that the survey highlights the effects of Sweden's ratification of the 1993 Hague Convention on regulations, organisation and processes. In carrying out the assignment, the investigator shall particularly highlight irregularities that point to structural or systematic problems that have existed or exist today.

The investigator shall therefore

- map and analyse regulations, organisation and processes within Sweden's international adoption activities, their development and consequences,
- if necessary, map and analyse regulations, organisation and processes relating to intermediary parties in countries of origin, as well as the responsibility and role that countries of origin and their intermediary parties have and have had in adoption mediation,
- investigate and clarify the responsibilities and roles of the Government, relevant government agencies, municipalities, authorised associations, non-profit organisations and other private actors in Sweden's international adoption activities,
- investigate and clarify the existence and extent of any irregularities in relation to both the countries of origin from which most international adoptions to Sweden have taken place and the countries of origin where there is knowledge or serious suspicion of irregularities in the adoption process,
- investigate and clarify whether the Government, state authorities, municipalities, authorised associations, non-profit organisations and other private actors have been aware of or involved in any irregularities, and clarify to what extent any involvement in irregularities was temporary or systematic, and
- investigate and clarify how the government, state authorities, municipalities, authorised associations, non-profit organisations and other private actors responded to any indications of irregularities and whether they thereby fulfilled their responsibilities or roles based on current regulations and organisation.

#### *CONSEQUENCES of IRREGULARITIES and need for support*

Both international and Swedish law contain provisions concerning the right of adoptees to their origins and their own identity. Knowledge of one's own life history can be of great importance to the mental health of adoptees. Adoptees' different experiences of adoption can affect them throughout their lives and at different stages. Various life events can therefore mean that adoptees are in need of adapted adoption-specific support.

Most adopted people think about their origins at some point, and some actively search for their roots and life history. Reports of suspected irregularities in the adoption process can cause concern, uncertainty and insecurity about issues of legal certainty and ethics in international adoptions in general and about one's own background. Discovering that the documentation surrounding one's adoption is incorrect, learning that one was adopted without the biological parents being given the opportunity to give informed consent, or that one has been the subject of child trafficking are events that no one should have to experience and that should not be allowed to happen. In cases where there are suspicions of irregularities in the adoption process, a search for one's origins can help the adoptee and their family to obtain clarification. Other support measures, such as counselling or treatment support, can also be helpful.

The Government has taken several measures to improve support for adoptees. Since January 2020, MFoF has been tasked with implementing a pilot project to provide individual support to adoptees in connection with searches for their origins. Since April 2020, the agency has also been tasked with providing adoption-specific professional counselling support to adoptees. Furthermore, the Government has tasked the National Board of Health and Welfare with conducting a survey and analysis in 2021 of how healthcare and social services meet the adoption-specific care and support needs of adoptees. The task focuses in particular on care and support measures for mental ill health. In addition, the Government has tasked the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Public Health Agency of Sweden, together with 24 other authorities, including MFoF, with submitting documentation for a new strategy in the area of mental health and suicide prevention. However, there may be reasons to further strengthen and develop adoption-specific support in other areas.

The investigator shall therefore

- investigate the need for adoption-specific support, propose what assistance and support measures should be offered and how these should be organised,
- investigate and analyse the consequences that irregularities in the adoption process may have for adoptees, adoptive parents and biological parents, and
- propose the necessary constitutional amendments and other measures.

*The way forward – HOW international adoption activities in Sweden can be developed*

Deficiencies that have existed or still exist in regulations, organisation and processes within Sweden's international adoption activities need to be clarified and analysed in order to prevent any irregularities in the future. The lessons learned, results and conclusions of the inquiry should also provide guidance for the development of Sweden's international adoption activities and how they can be further strengthened from a child rights and legal certainty perspective. Against the background of historical developments, and in general, the investigator shall analyse and take a position on how today's regulations, organisation and processes within Sweden's international adoption activities can be changed and strengthened in order to further ensure legal certainty and that the best interests of the child always take precedence.

It is of great importance that international adoptions are carried out with a high and consistent level of quality throughout the country and that local authorities meet the support needs that may arise after an adoption has been completed for children, young people and their families. Municipalities play an important role in ensuring that the adoption process takes children's rights into account, as they are responsible for assessing whether applicants are suitable for adoption and for ensuring that the adoption is in the best interests of the child. The quality and consistency of the assessments carried out by municipalities also affect legal certainty. The Swedish National Audit Office notes that the quality of the municipalities' consent investigations varies and that there is therefore a risk that legal certainty and the child rights perspective will not be adequately addressed in some cases when municipalities make their decisions. The Swedish National Audit Office considers that the municipalities need more support to carry out the investigations. The Swedish National Audit Office also proposes that the municipalities' work on consent investigations should be consolidated and carried out by fewer municipalities (Swedish National Audit Office, 2021:1, Organising international adoption activities, p. 107 f.). The MFoF has previously issued general advice to municipalities on the adoption process. However, these general guidelines are not binding rules. In order to influence the process in a clearer and better way, on 9 September this year the Government decided on an amendment to the Social Services Ordinance (2001:937) that gives the MFoF the right to issue binding regulations for the handling and documentation of cases concerning international adoptions.

One area of Sweden's international adoption activities where objections have been raised in various contexts concerns the rules governing private adoptions. Among other things, it has been stated that the adoption process for the adoption of a known child is not clear and uniform and that the regulatory system may need to be reviewed (Government Bill 2003/04:131, p. 75 f.). The Inquiry on International Adoptions also stated in its report Adoption – at what price? (SOU 2003:49) that the adoption process for private adoptions is unclear and that the division of responsibility between the authorities concerned is unclear (SOU 2003:49 p. 302 f.). Furthermore, the MFoF has pointed out that there are particular difficulties in ensuring that private adoptions are in the best interests of the child; for example, it can be difficult to assess whether the child already lives in a functioning family situation in their home country.

According to the Swedish National Financial Management Authority, the risk of irregularities in the international adoption system is greatest in the case of private adoptions. The review carried out by the MFoF in the case of a private adoption is not as thorough as when an adoption takes place through an authorised association and its authorised partner countries. In addition, adoptive parents who have adopted privately are often not as well prepared for adoption as those who have adopted through an authorised association. The MFoF is not currently aware of all private adoptions handled by the district court. Nor does the district court keep statistics on the adoption cases it handles based on the type of adoption, which means that it is difficult to know how many individual adoptions are actually carried out. Furthermore, the Swedish National Financial Management Authority highlights the need to clarify the responsibilities of municipalities and the MFoF in individual adoptions and to establish clearer criteria for what is to be considered an acceptable procedure for adoptions. The question of whether it should be possible to carry out private adoptions from countries where a Swedish adoption agency already has a cooperation agreement is also raised. The Swedish National Audit Office proposes a review of how private adoptions should be handled in Sweden (Swedish National Audit Office, 2021:1, The organisation of international adoption activities, p. 117 f.).

The investigator shall therefore

- take a position on whether the current regulations, organisation and processes within Sweden's international adoption activities need to be changed or strengthened in order to further strengthen and ensure the child rights perspective and legal certainty,

- submit proposals on what measures the Government, state authorities and adoption agencies in Sweden should take when information about irregularities in international adoption activities comes to light,
- identify and analyse the problems and risks that currently exist in relation to private adoptions and consider whether the possibility of such adoptions should be restricted,
- take a position on whether it should be possible to carry out private adoptions from countries of origin where a Swedish authorised association already has a cooperation agreement,
- consider whether there is a need for the courts to develop their statistics on different types of adoption and whether the courts should have a reporting obligation regarding adoptions to the Ministry of Justice, and
- propose the constitutional amendments and other measures needed to further strengthen the child rights perspective and legal certainty.

### **Starting points and limitations**

The starting point for the investigator's work shall be the rights of the child in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1993 Hague Convention.

The investigation shall cover the period from the mid-20th century to the present day. The investigator shall focus on the countries of origin from which most international adoptions to Sweden have taken place, as well as the countries of origin where there is knowledge or serious suspicion that irregularities have occurred in the adoption process. The investigator shall, among other things, examine international adoptions to Sweden from Chile and China.

The analyses of the responsibilities and positions of the government, state authorities, municipalities, authorised associations, non-profit organisations and other private actors shall be based on the regulations and organisation in force at the time and take into account the attitudes and norms that existed in society at the time.

The assignment does not include reviewing individual adoption cases. Nor does the assignment include considering possible liability issues in individual cases or financial compensation or other redress to individuals who have been affected.

The investigator may consider related issues that are connected to the questions to be investigated.

### **Impact assessments**

The investigator shall comprehensively and thoroughly examine the consequences of the proposals submitted. In addition to the provisions of Sections 14–15a of the Committee Ordinance (1998:1474), the investigator shall specifically analyse the significance of the proposals for the authorised associations. If the proposals are expected to lead to increased public expenditure, the investigator shall propose how this is to be financed. If a proposal is submitted that changes or extends the responsibilities or powers of an authority, the costs of this shall be reported. If the proposals affect local self-government, the consequences and the specific considerations that justify the proposals shall be reported separately (see Chapter 14, Section 3 of the Instrument of Government). The impact analysis regarding gender equality shall refer to conditions in both the countries of origin and in Sweden, to the extent that they are affected by the inquiry's report. A report on the consequences of the proposals and their compatibility with Sweden's international human rights obligations, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1993 Hague Convention, shall be provided.

### **Contacts and reporting on the assignment**

The investigator shall gather knowledge, experiences and opinions from adoptees, adoptive parents, relevant government agencies, municipalities, regions, authorised associations and adoptee interest groups. To this end, the investigator shall seek to obtain as representative a sample of adoptees and adoptive parents as possible. The investigator shall also draw on the knowledge and experience of other relevant organisations, researchers and authorities in Sweden and abroad. As far as possible, the investigator shall gather knowledge and views from private individuals and defunct associations that have arranged international adoptions to Sweden. The investigator shall be assisted by a reference group of relevant actors who shall be given the opportunity to provide information and opinions.

The investigator shall keep abreast of and take into account relevant work being carried out within the Government Offices, the Ministry of Finance, the National Board of Health and Welfare and other

relevant authorities and within the investigative system. The investigator shall take into account the regulations, organisation and development of international adoption activities in other Nordic countries. The investigator shall also make any international comparisons deemed appropriate and take into account Sweden's international convention commitments in this area. Furthermore, the investigator shall gather knowledge and seek dialogue, where possible, with other relevant investigations, including criminal investigations, concerning irregularities in international adoptions in other countries.

The assignment shall be reported no later than 7 November 2023.

(Ministry of Health and Social Affairs)



# Committee Directive 2023:113

## **Supplementary directive to the Adoption Commission (S 2021:08)**

Decision at the Government meeting on 6 July 2023

### **Extended time for the assignment**

On 28 October 2021, the Government adopted committee directives on Sweden's international adoption activities – lessons learned and the way forward (dir. 2021:95). The assignment was to be reported by 7 November 2023 at the latest.

The investigation period has been extended. The assignment is now to be reported by 16 December 2024 at the latest.

(Ministry of Health and Social Affairs)



# Committee Directive 2024:86

## **Supplementary directive to the Adoption Commission (S 2021:08)**

Decision at the Government meeting on 19 September.

### **Extended time for the assignment**

On 28 October 2021, the Government decided on committee directives concerning Sweden's international adoption activities – lessons learned and the way forward (dir.2021:95). The assignment was to be reported by 7 November 2023 at the latest. Through supplementary directives decided on 6 July 2023, the investigation period was extended to 16 December 2024 (dir. 2023:113).

The investigation period is extended. The assignment is instead to be reported by 1 March 2025 at the latest.

(Ministry of Social Affairs)



# Committee Directive 2024:120

## **Supplementary directive to the Adoption Commission (S 2021:08)**

Decision at the Government meeting on 5 December 2024

### **Extended time for the assignment**

On 28 October 2021, the Government decided on committee directives concerning Sweden's international adoption activities – lessons learned and the way forward (dir. 2021:95). The assignment was to be reported by 7 November 2023 at the latest. Through supplementary directives decided on 6 July 2023, the investigation period was extended to 16 December 2024 (dir. 2023:113). Through further supplementary directives adopted on 19 September 2024, the investigation period was extended to 1 March 2025 (dir. 2024:86).

The investigation period is extended. The assignment shall instead be reported by 2 June 2025 at the latest.

(Ministry of Social Affairs)

# Government reports 2025

## Chronological list

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1. Stricter requirements for Swedish citizenship. Ju.
2. Some questions about fundamental freedoms and rights. Ju.
3. Tax incentives for research and development. A review of the R&D tax credit and expert tax rules. Fi.
4. Modern and simpler tax rules for working life. Fi.
5. Fees for regional cooperation – and other measures for safety in the built environment. LI.
6. Duty calls! A modern personnel supply for civil defence. Fö.
7. New nuclear power in Sweden – more efficient licensing and appropriate fees. KN.
8. Better conditions for safety and a peaceful study environment in schools. U.
9. On linguistic grounds. U.
10. A changed abortion law – for good, safe and accessible abortion care. S.
11. The age of criminal responsibility. Ju.
12. The AI Commission's Roadmap for Sweden. Fi.
13. More efficient organisation of smaller authorities – analysis and proposals. Fi.
14. Stricter environmental criminal law and an effective system of sanctions. KN.
15. Stronger incentives and opportunities for aid recipients. Volumes 1 and 2. S.
16. A new regulatory framework for supervision and storage. Yes.
17. Adaptation of Swedish law to the EU Deforestation Regulation. LI.
18. An equivalent grading system. Volumes 1 and 2. U.
19. Knowledge for all – new curricula with a focus on teaching and learning. U.
20. Municipal connection to the activities of the Payment Authority. Fi.
21. The Environmental Objectives Committee's proposal for a strategy on how Sweden should meet the EU's commitments on biodiversity and net absorption of greenhouse gases from the land use sector (LULUCF). KN.
22. Improved competition in public and private activities. KN.
23. Compensation rules with a focus on the victim. Ju.
24. Focus on the audience – Reforms for a stronger film industry. Ku.
25. Workplace crime – approach, tools and measures, continued work. A.
26. Time for teaching – measures for good teaching and the attractiveness of the teaching profession. U.
27. A social work education in tune with the times. U.
28. Freedom from violence, oppression and exploitation. A gender equality policy strategy against violence and stronger governance by central authorities. A.
29. Improved quality at Samhall and more paths to sheltered employment. A.
30. Simpler VAT rules for the sale of second-hand goods and food donations. Fi.
31. Phasing out of permanent residence permits and certain adjustments to the minimum level in accordance with the EU Migration and Asylum Pact. Ju.
32. Certain changes to hunting legislation. LI.
33. Stricter and clearer requirements for good conduct for residence permits. Ju.
34. More modern consumer protection for distance contracts. Ju.
35. The Establishment Housing Act – A new system for the settlement of certain new arrivals. A.

36. Protection of biodiversity in marine areas outside national jurisdiction. UD.
37. Stricter conditions for the independent school sector. U.
38. Caring for children and young people. S.
39. Digital technology on equal terms. Regulation of social services and activities under the LSS. S.
40. Safer amusement parks. Ju.
41. Pension levels and pension contributions – analyses over a hundred-year period. S.
42. Security Protection Act – further additions. Ju.
43. Ensure access to medicines – prescription and dispensing in situations of shortage. S.
44. Improved support in schools. U.
45. Increased exchange of information between authorities – some related issues. Ju.
46. Safer sporting events. Ju.
47. Tension in everyday life – how do we secure our future electricity supply? KN.
48. Strengthened pandemic preparedness. S.
49. The Security Police's processing of personal data. Ju.
50. A new national authority for wildlife management. LI.
51. Better conditions for climate adaptation. KN.
52. Increased transparency in political processes. Ju.
53. Eligibility for social insurance and financial assistance for certain groups. S.
54. Stricter regulations on deportation due to criminal offences. Ju.
55. A reformed social orientation programme for better integration. A.
56. Stronger protection for the independence of courts and judges. Yes.
57. Police preparedness in times of peace, crisis and war. Yes.
58. A stronger horse industry – for entrepreneurship, gender equality, equality and public health. LI.
59. Stronger legislation against honour-related violence and oppression. Ju.
60. A stronger fund market. Fi.
61. Sweden's international adoption activities – lessons learned and the way forward. Volumes 1 and 2. S.

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- Improved quality at Samhall and more paths to sheltered employment. [29]
- The Establishment Housing Act – a new system for the settlement of certain new arrivals. [35]
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The age of criminal responsibility. [11]

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Safer sporting events. [46]

The Security Police's processing of personal data. [49]

Increased transparency in political processes. [52]

Stricter rules on deportation due to criminal offences. [54]

Stronger protection for the independence of courts and judges. [56]

Police preparedness in times of peace, crisis and war. [57]

Strengthened legislation against honour-related violence and oppression. [59]

### **Ministry of Finance**

- Tax incentives for research and development. A review of the R&D tax credit and expert tax rules. [3]
- Modern and simpler tax rules for working life. [4]
- The AI Commission's Roadmap for Sweden. [12]
- More efficient organisation of smaller authorities – analysis and proposals. [13]
- Municipal connection to the Payment Authority's activities. [20]
- Simpler VAT rules for the sale of second-hand goods and food donations. [30]
- A stronger fund market. [60]

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- Duty calls! Modern staffing of the civil defence. [6]

### **Ministry of Climate and Business**

New nuclear power in Sweden – more efficient licensing procedures and appropriate fees. [7]

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