



SWEDISH NATIONAL  
AUDIT OFFICE

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## Summary

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# The Swedish Transport Agency's supervision

## – governance and priorities

### Summary

The Swedish National Audit Office (Swedish NAO) has audited the Swedish Transport Agency's supervisory activities, in particular, whether the Government's and Swedish Transport Agency's governance leads to effective supervisory activities. The Swedish Transport Agency carries out supervision in around 100 areas within aviation, maritime transport, road traffic and rail traffic. The purpose of the supervision differs between the various supervisory areas, but in general, the objective is to maintain traffic safety, reduce environmental impact and safeguard well-functioning markets within the transport sector. The assessment of the Swedish NAO is that there are shortcomings in the governance that have had a negative impact on supervision. In particular, the lack of an overall prioritisation approach means that the Swedish Transport Agency cannot ensure that the supervision being carried out is the one that provides the most benefit. A lack of objectives, metrics and follow-up of the supervisory activities makes it difficult to monitor the development of the operations. The Government has also not requested sufficient documentation to be able to follow up supervision. Shortcomings in the Swedish Transport Agency's governance has meant that unused appropriations that could have been applied to supervisory activities have been returned to the treasury.

## **Objectives and follow-up are absent**

The Swedish NAO's reason for initiating the audit was that the Swedish Transport Agency itself had described its supervisory activities as being neglected. The audit shows that the Swedish Transport Agency in many cases lacks criteria for when a supervisory area should be considered as being deficient, except in cases in which supervision is internationally regulated and subject to external review. There is also a lack of sufficient analysis and descriptions of whether, and if so, to what extent the deficient supervision can give rise to negative consequences.

The decentralised governance model applied by the Swedish Transport Agency is advantageous because decisions are taken close to the activities, but needs to be supplemented with a more comprehensive analysis and follow-up. Centrally set objectives are absent for what the supervisory activities should achieve. Effectiveness measurements are also absent. The Swedish Transport Agency is working towards the development of metrics for supervision, but much remains to be done.

The Swedish Transport Agency has an ambition to carry out supervision where there are the greatest risks and where the greatest impact can be achieved. Since the agency management and the two responsible departments lack methods and models for weighing the needs for supervision within various areas against each other, the Swedish Transport Agency cannot ensure that their ambition is realised.

## **Financial management is inadequate**

In 2020 and 2021, the Swedish Transport Agency requested increases of its appropriations for fee-based activities of SEK 86 million and SEK 241 million respectively. However, the audit shows that the Swedish Transport Agency did not manage to exhaust its appropriations for fee-based activities in 2020 and 2021 and has been compelled to return unused appropriations to the treasury. The same situation will repeat itself in 2022. Within some of the areas described as being neglected, the Swedish Transport Agency has collected more money in fees than the supervision has cost. In other words, there has been a surplus of fees in several important areas of supervision for several years, while the appropriations for fee-based activities have not been exhausted. There are objects of supervision that have paid for supervision they have not received and there is scope in the appropriations for more supervision. This seems to indicate a lack of governance.

## **Risk of nationally decided supervision being downgraded**

The Swedish Transport Agency's prospect of making effective priorities is limited by the fact that the scope of supervision within many areas is determined by international legislation that Sweden must adhere to. Since Sweden may risk incurring sanctions if the international commitments are not met, the Swedish

Transport Agency gives these areas high priority. However, this means that the supervisory areas in which there are no internationally determined quantitative targets risk being downgraded when internationally set objectives must be achieved. Furthermore, in practice, permit applications and maintaining records is given higher priority than supervision. The nationally regulated supervision is therefore often given lower priority.

## **The Government has not followed up**

The Swedish Transport Agency has pointed out that supervision has been neglected. There are indications of problems in particular with supervision of national maritime transport, the EU Directive on Network and Information Security, the Protective Security Act, driver education and reporting centres for taxis. Despite this, the Government has not followed up or requested supplementary information to be able to assess the gravity.

## **Recommendations**

### **The Swedish Transport Agency should**

- start a regular agency-wide analysis to determine which supervisory areas have the greatest supervisory needs and where supervision can be most beneficial. This work should serve as a basis for the Swedish Transport Agency's operational planning and overall governance
- introduce objectives for the supervisory activities and associated metrics that can be used to evaluate operations.

### **The Government should**

- clarify what reporting requirements are to apply for the Swedish Transport Agency
- Consider whether the Swedish Transport Agency should be allowed to make use of the earnings from its type approval activities.