

Policy



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DECISION BY: The Executive Board
RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT: General Secretariat
RESPONSIBLE MANAGER: Director of Communications, Ann-Leena Mikiver

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■ The Riksbank's communication policy

Communication objectives, aims and target groups

The policy aims to describe the Riksbank's overall view of communication and to ensure that communication is conducted in a clear and well-considered way. Communication is an important strategic tool at the Riksbank and the policy is intended to act as an aid to all of the Riksbank's operations.

The Riksbank has two main tasks: to maintain price stability and to promote a safe and efficient payment system. The Riksbank's vision is to be among the best in terms of quality, efficiency and confidence.

The aims of the Riksbank's communication are to explain the Riksbank's tasks, vision, operations and preconditions, to enable examination and evaluation and to contribute to internal quality and efficiency.

The objectives of the Riksbank's communication are to:

- Make it possible for the public and the principal, the Riksdag, to understand and evaluate the work of the Riksbank.
- Contribute to a high level of confidence in the operations of the Riksbank.
- Contribute to the understanding and predictability of monetary policy and to spread knowledge about the stability of the financial system.
- Give the employees relevant information so that they can carry out their work, feel involved and motivated and experience job satisfaction.

Important target groups for the Riksbank include members of parliament, financial agents, authorities, researchers, representatives of business and industry, the social partners and the media. Their knowledge and attitudes have a major impact on public confidence in the Riksbank. Several important target groups, such as authorities and researchers, also include international players. The Riksbank's employees are also an important target group.

The Riksbank's communication – approach

The Riksbank's work includes setting the repo rate, monitoring the financial system and supplying Sweden with banknotes and coins. The operations of the Riksbank

thus affect most Swedes in one way or another. It is therefore important to create clarity about, and acceptance of, the Riksbank's actions. The Riksbank does this by conducting a responsive dialogue with external stakeholders. Credible communication helps to maintain a high level of confidence in the Riksbank.

As the Riksbank has an independent role it is particularly important that communication is open so that decisions can be examined and evaluated. Openness also improves the Riksbank's internal efforts to improve its operations and contributes to quality and efficiency in the organisation. The guiding principles for the Riksbank's communication are that it shall be *open* and *clear*.

- **Open.** Information shall be easily accessible both internally and externally, subject to the limitations arising from the legislation on secrecy and public access to information.¹ Information that is considered likely to influence the financial markets shall be made public as quickly as possible.
- **Clear.** The Riksbank's role and the reasons for its decisions shall be communicated clearly. Great emphasis shall be placed on getting the main message across. The Riksbank's communication shall be comprehensible, impartial, relevant and well-founded. The Riksbank shall be responsive and use plain and clear language that is adapted to the needs and wishes of the target groups.

Many decisions relate to complex issues, which means that the associated communication should be well-prepared and planned in advance. The Communications Secretariat shall therefore plan and support this work in close cooperation with the Riksbank's departments. If possible, information should be communicated internally first. If the information is considered to be market sensitive it shall be communicated internally and externally at the same time.

Monetary policy communication

The Riksbank shall explain and clarify its reasoning so that the target groups not only understand but are able to predict the monetary policy deliberations. This increases the credibility of monetary policy. Analyses, forecasts, background material and the minutes of monetary policy meetings shall therefore be published on the Riksbank's website and be communicated at personal meetings with the Riksbank's target groups, both nationally and internationally. As the repo-rate decisions affect society as a whole, great emphasis shall be placed on communicating the decisions locally in different parts of the country.

As monetary-policy information is market sensitive the Riksbank shall follow a clear communication process. This will ensure that all of the target groups have the same opportunity to assimilate information on monetary policy. The Riksbank shall

¹ The Freedom of the Press Act and the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression contain regulations on freedom of communication in relation to the media. Freedom of expression and the freedom to communicate are two of the pillars of a free society and create the preconditions for a thorough examination and inspection of the Riksbank's operations. The Riksbank is also covered by the principle of public access to information - information in official documents shall be made available on request providing that the documents have not been classified as secret, and the Riksbank shall provide information relating to its sphere of operations.

therefore announce the dates and times of the monetary-policy meetings well in advance. In connection with these meetings, the Riksbank shall communicate its view of the economic situation in a Monetary Policy Report or Monetary Policy Update. The Executive Board of the Riksbank shall also present its view of the repo rate in the years ahead at this time.

The Riksbank shall communicate the Executive Board's decisions on the day after each monetary-policy meeting in a press release and at a press conference. Approximately two weeks after every monetary policy meeting, the Riksbank shall publish minutes that report the discussions at the meetings. The members of the Executive Board shall be named so that it is easy to follow how they argued and voted. The Riksbank shall submit a written report on monetary policy to the Riksdag Committee on Finance at least twice a year.

Financial stability communication

In the case of financial stability the Riksbank has no binding statutory tools at its disposal. Communication is therefore central to the work of preventing and managing financial crises. One of the tasks of the Riksbank is thus to provide information on risks in, and the resilience of, the financial system so that the target groups can address these risks. The Riksbank also has the task of spreading knowledge about national and international regulations and of expressing its views on these regulations.

The Executive Board of the Riksbank shall regularly present its assessment of financial stability in Sweden and highlight significant financial-stability risks, and shall also, when necessary, recommend measures that should be taken to manage these risks. The Riksbank shall also work to ensure that financial regulatory frameworks and financial supervision – both in Sweden and abroad – create the preconditions for an efficient and stable financial system. In this way the Riksbank can prevent threats to financial stability. The Riksbank shall be predictable and give ample prior notice of when the Executive Board will present its assessment of financial stability. Analyses and recommendations shall be published on the Riksbank's website.

The Riksbank shall communicate its assessments and analyses of the stability of the financial system as openly and as clearly as possible, provided that the information concerned is not subject to secrecy. When there is unease or a crisis in the financial system, the Riksbank shall communicate its overall assessments of financial stability more rapidly and more frequently. At the same time, however, deciding exactly what should be communicated is particularly important in a crisis - in such circumstances communication needs to be coordinated to a greater extent in order to reduce the risk of unclear or conflicting messages. This applies both within the Riksbank and between the Riksbank and other authorities with responsibility for financial stability, as well as between the Riksbank and financial-market participants.

External communication of the Executive Board members

The members of the Executive Board are appointed with individual mandates but make decisions collectively, which demands a high degree of clarity when

communicating the reasoning behind the Riksbank's decisions. In their external communication they should:

- **Communicate both the views of the Riksbank and their own stance.** The members of the Executive Board shall take joint responsibility for spreading knowledge about the Riksbank's views, tasks and operations. The members shall also freely and with a high degree of integrity present their own stances and views in the economic debate. However, until the minutes of the monetary-policy meetings are published it is the Riksbank's decisions that are communicated.
- **Not anticipate their own or their colleagues future decisions.** Once the minutes have been published, all of the Executive Board members may present their own personal deliberations regarding the decisions made and the forecasts. They may, for example, comment on new statistics and relate them to the earlier forecast and give an account of the basis for the decisions - that is which variables are always important and which may be of particular importance at the time concerned. They shall not, however, comment on their own or their colleagues' future decisions.
- **Avoid political and economic pressure.** In order to safeguard confidence in the Riksbank it is important that the members do not provide exclusive information at closed commercial or party-political events. On the other hand, the Riksbank and its Executive Board shall actively participate in the economic debate and be very open to the media.
- **Refrain from making macroeconomic statements ahead of the monetary-policy decisions.** In the seven days preceding a decision, Executive Board members should normally refrain from making public statements and meetings with external parties that relate to macroeconomic developments or to monetary policy. Otherwise, the member concerned must inform the other Executive Board members and the Communications Secretariat.
- **Strive to express their arguments clearly and briefly.** The minutes of the monetary policy meetings are important documents that shall enable the examination of the Executive Board's work. They shall report what was said at the meetings. In order to facilitate examination, the members should express themselves briefly, clearly and with a focus on their own arguments.

Responsibility for communication

Internal information and communication are management responsibilities. Managers should provide their staff with the information they need in their daily work and ensure that they are kept well-informed about the Riksbank's operations. The Executive Board and the managers have a responsibility to provide information about the Riksbank's vision, objectives, strategies and guiding principles.

Within the Riksbank, responsibility for making external statements about the Riksbank's operations is decentralised. This means that the respective departmental heads comment on issues relating to the department concerned and that staff

members provide factual information and comment on issues on which they are experts. In the case of issues of an overriding nature, the Riksbank shall be represented by the Governor, another member of the Executive Board, the Head of the General Secretariat or the Director of Communications. The Chief Press Officer or the Press Office may also make statements. However, only the members of the Executive Board may communicate independent conclusions about monetary policy and financial stability.

Communication shall be prepared in close cooperation with the Communications Secretariat and contacts with the media shall always take place in cooperation with the Press Office. In crisis situations, the provision of information shall be coordinated by the Communications Secretariat together with the Riksbank's crisis management group. In periods of crisis it is particularly important to ensure that the Riksbank's communicates with one voice, and to ensure that communication is coordinated with that of other authorities.

Employees have a responsibility to keep themselves sufficiently well-informed to be able to conduct and develop their work. It is important to internal quality and efficiency that knowledge, ideas and viewpoints are shared. This is also important for a good working climate.

Communication channels

The Riksbank shall use its channels of communication so that relevant information reaches the right target groups in a way that is adapted to their needs in terms of format, content and language. The channels shall also as far as possible enable a dialogue with the target groups and ensure that knowledge about the Riksbank's operations reaches them. This can, for example, take place in the form of press meetings, parliamentary committee hearings and meetings with target groups in Sweden and abroad.

Internal communication shall increase the understanding of, and commitment to, the Riksbank's operations internally. The main channels for this are the managers and the intranet. The managers have a particular responsibility for making overall messages comprehensible and relevant to their colleagues and their staff.

The Riksbank's most important channel for external information is www.riksbank.se. All public speeches, press releases, publications and minutes shall be published here. The media is an important channel in addition to the Riksbank's own channels. The managers and the intranet are the most important channels for internal information.

The Director of Communication is responsible for ensuring compliance with the communication policy. Any deviations from the policy should therefore be discussed with the Director of Communications in advance.