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## Ethics Management in Swedish Political Parties

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### ABSTRACT

Political parties are indispensable actors in representative democracy. However, trust in parties has declined in many democracies. Ethics management is a potential mechanism for parties to keep or strengthen public trust. Previous research about how parties have developed internal ethics mechanisms to promote organisational integrity is scant. This article explores how Swedish parliamentary parties use ethical strategies to uphold standards of conduct for their members. Sweden is a high trust society, but its citizens perceive risks of corrupt influence as relevant. Amongst representative institutions, parties score the lowest levels of trust. Therefore, Swedish parties are interesting to study in order to understand how they uphold integrity standards and assure voters that they are ethical organisations. We show that parties increasingly use formal ethics guidelines to set integrity standards within their organisations and integrity pledges for candidates. Parties also use relatively well-developed monitoring instruments but reactively rather than proactively. Tools to enforce integrity are few and often concentrated on formal expulsion procedures, which are rarely used. Swedish parties have during the last 15 years incrementally developed their ethics management processes. It remains to be seen to what extent these changes will transcend formal rules and strengthen integrity in the long run.

### KEYWORDS

Political parties, ethics management, integrity, values, rules

## Introduction

The integrity of political actors, decision-making and implementation is important for democratic governance (e.g., Huberts, 2018; Rose & Heywood, 2013; Rothstein, 2011). Political parties are crucial democratic actors as they can channel political will and facilitate accountability (e.g., Aylott, 2011; Bergman et al., 2003). However, in many democracies, citizens view political parties as among the institutions most affected by corruption and have low trust in them (e.g., European Commission, 2020, p. 27).

Ethics management can potentially help political parties to improve these perceptions by strengthening integrity and securing good governance. But what measures are parties taking to foster high organisational integrity?

This article aims to explore the ethics management strategies of Swedish parliamentary parties. Our two research questions focus on the ethical instruments adopted, their functions, and how they are given effect:

- What mechanisms (ethics instruments) are Swedish political parties using to i) define what is ethical conduct and governance, ii) guide members towards this, iii) monitor adherence, and iv) sanction violations?

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- What processes and structures are used to give effect to these mechanisms?

We show that Swedish parties in their ethics management strategies, use different ethics instruments, both rules and values based (see below), to define what is ethical conduct and governance in their party, guide members toward such conduct, monitor behaviour and activities, and enforce ethics. This includes increasingly adopting formal ethics codes to determine what integrity is in the party and using pre-electoral integrity pledges to guide their candidates.

Previous research in organisational ethics, with a focus on government organisations rather than political parties, indicates that ethics instruments put in place by organisations are often neither well thought out nor effectively enforced. Strategies pursued also tend to be rules orientated rather than values orientated (e.g., Anechiarico & Jacobs, 1996; Heywood, 2012), thus focusing on how to prevent and discipline wrongdoing rather than promoting good behaviour, while the literature has suggested combining rules and values orientated measures as a more effective approach (e.g., Cooper, 2006).

But knowledge about ethics instruments adopted by Swedish parties and how they operate is scant. From studies of Swedish public sector organisations, we know that formal ethics management (Menzel, 2007, p. 14), e.g., ethics codes, obligatory ethics training, or interest disclosure rules, has not been as prevalent—although this is increasingly changing—as more informal approaches, e.g., leaders serving as role models or positive reinforcement (e.g., Demmke et al., 2020; Svensson & Wood, 2009).

Political parties in Sweden have largely been self-regulating (e.g., Larue, 2012). A limited legal regulation of political parties particularly regarding funding and transparency drew international criticism (e.g., GRECO, 2009, 2013), which led to new legislative measures concerning transparency of funding (e.g., a ban for parties and candidates to accept anonymous contributions above a threshold of approx. 220 euros). It should be noted that a higher percentage of respondents in Sweden (49 per cent) compared to the EU average (33 per cent) perceive transparency and supervision of the financing<sup>1</sup> of political parties as sufficient.

Results for the Swedish case, we argue, are also relevant for other cases in the context of established and wealthy democracies, where parties operate in an environment where citizens on one hand have relatively high trust in governing institutions, but on the other hand also view corruption as a salient problem (Bergh et al., 2016, p. 61; European Commission, 2020; Johnston, 2005; Linde & Erlingsson, 2013; Warren, 2015). Membership in parliamentary political parties has declined heavily since the 1970s but has stabilised since 2007.<sup>2</sup> In Sweden, political parties rank low in public trust (yet it has increased slightly since 1997) compared to other institutions in society, e.g., courts, police, church, schools, press or trade unions (see Martinsson & Andersson, 2021, pp. 5–11; Medieakademin, 2021). There are however also some interesting differences between political parties concerning these integrity and trust issues. Compared to EU countries, trust for Swedish parties seems slightly higher (Pew Research Center, 2019, pp. 98–103). Similarly, 32 per cent of Swedes believe corruption to be widespread among political parties, which is lower than the EU average of 53 per cent (European Commission, 2020, pp. 30, 54).

In the following theory section, we develop our central concepts and derive our model of analysis from previous research. Thereafter, we discuss the method and materials used. In the results section, we present and analyse data concerning ethics instruments, and the processes and structures used for implementing them. Finally, we conclude and discuss our results.

## **Ethics management strategies in organisations: Theory and model of analysis**

Our view of ethics, which we conceptually use interchangeably with integrity, in political parties is related to our study focus on how parties work to maintain ethical governance in their organisations. Here, our take is influenced by Huberts (2018) discussion of integrity as behaviour,

process and procedure in governance (rather than the content or outcomes of such processes) “in accordance with relevant moral values, norms, and rules” as seen by “relevant publics” (pp. 20, 28). For parties, this means that ethics violations<sup>3</sup> may concern a broad range of behaviour from corruption to e.g., inappropriate treatment of colleagues or citizens. It also matters how behaviour and processes are perceived outside the party, not least by the electorate (we come back to this below).

The literature on organisational ethics and ethics management emphasises the challenges involved in securing high integrity in multifaceted organisations (e.g., Cooper, 2006). This applies to political parties, which consist of a number of different elements that interact with each other (Katz & Mair, 1994): various branches (national, regional, local and others, e.g., women’s organisations), with internal delegation chains and accountability mechanisms, and several types of members: e.g., paid employees (the party bureaucracy), voluntaries, members elected to office (at various levels), and passive members (e.g., Poguntke et al., 2016).

Parties put forward candidates for political office and use various mechanisms to hold them accountable, for example using their strong leverage of nominations to their election lists (Müller, 2000). As concerns upholding integrity from various types of members, including elected candidates, parties generally prefer self-regulation and as little external interference and control as possible (de Sousa & Coroado, 2021, p. 8), which is certainly true for the Swedish case.

Ethics management is a way for parties to work toward integrity and avoid ethics violations. It is “the organization of ethics” (Kaptein, 1998, p. 44) and concerns activities used by organisations “to stimulate and enforce integrity and prevent corruption and other integrity violations” (Maesschalck & Bertok, 2009, p. 9). It thus aims both to promote actions that are ethical and in line with the organisation’s values (the dos) and to prevent certain actions (the don’ts) which are illegal or violate the organisation’s rules. As highlighted by Menzel (2007, p. 10) ethics management similarly emphasises the active promotion of a strong ethics culture in an organisation and how to create “an ethical sensitivity and consciousness that permeates all aspects of getting things done...” This underlines that ethics management is not only about rules, sanctions and enforcement but also about mechanisms promoting ethical development among organisational members. Moreover, as argued by Anechiarico and Segal (2020) ethics management strategies need to involve sub-management level organizational members not to become top-down dictate. A final important aspect to consider is how ethics management is affected by its relationship with internal and external stakeholders (Kaptein, 1998, p. 15). This has been increasingly studied in business organisations (Anechiarico & Segal, 2020) but equally apply to parties who need members and voters, cooperate with various sister organisations and interest groups, and at the same time deal with rather low trust. Thus, in studying ethics management strategies we should consider what ethics mechanisms are used to secure good behaviour in the organisation and also how this is important to collaborating and building trust with internal and external stakeholders.

### ***Studying ethics management strategies in parties***

To study ethics management in parties we first use the integrity management framework as developed by Maesschalck and Bertok (2009) to elaborate our analysis of ethics instruments and their functions, processes and structures. Secondly, we discuss this critically based on literature emphasising problems with common ethics management approaches and adding perspectives concerning inclusiveness.

The integrity management framework consists of ethics instruments, processes and structures, and contextual factors that affect ethics. Our study focuses on ethics instruments directly aimed at integrity. The framework outlines four functions that such instruments need to perform to stimulate and enforce integrity and prevent integrity violations. First, ethics instruments can be

used to determine and define what integrity is in an organisation, for example, ethics codes, dilemma analysis, and risk analysis. Secondly, how are members of the organisation guided towards integrity? This concerns instruments such as integrity training and advice, coaching and counselling. Thirdly, ethics instruments are used to monitor integrity, e.g., whistle-blowing policies, disclosure of private interests, and survey measures of integrity dilemmas. Finally, formal and informal sanctions such as procedures for handling integrity violations serve to enforce integrity (Maesschalck & Bertok, 2009, pp. 28–29).

Processes and structures are important to give effect to the ethics instruments used. Processes concern how instruments are institutionalised in the organisation, and how they are continuously developed and adapted. Structures relate to organisational features, and who is responsible for what and how to coordinate actions of various actors that influence members' integrity (Maesschalck & Bertok, 2009, pp. 7, 21–22, 62).

Critics have pointed out a tendency in ethics management to take a top-down perspective on integrity issues, controlling the actions of employees reducing discretion to avoid illegal behaviour and wrongdoing (e.g., Anechiarico & Segal, 2020; Tremblay et al., 2017).

This is related to the discussion about the pros and cons with external respective internal controls (or rules based versus values based ethics instruments) (e.g., Anechiarico & Jacobs, 1996; Cooper, 2006; Demmke, 2020; Heywood, 2012; Hoekstra et al., 2008; Lewis & Gilman, 2005, p. 15; Paine, 1994). External controls (i.e., rules based ethics instruments) refer to mechanisms placed outside the individual, e.g., rules, codes of conduct, and sanctions that aim to get correct behaviour by the motivation of external outcomes such as rewards or avoiding punishment. Internal controls (i.e., values based ethics instruments) refer to mechanisms within the individual, where the organisation aim to commit to organisational values through self-regulation and nurturing moral character, and reasoning, for example using ethics training and dilemma workshops (Cooper, 2006, pp. 149–150, 156). Overall, rules-based approaches tend to focus more narrowly on corruption and illegality, while values-based approaches aim for ethics and good governance more broadly. In political parties, the scope of behaviour and actions that their ethics management deal with has broadened over time, which could be exemplified by the importance of, and attention paid to, harassment and sexual intimidation issues across Europe. However, less is known how parties in practice go about dealing with such issues.

The literature has much come to rest with that a combination of values and rules mechanisms is needed (Huberts & van Montfort, 2020; Lewis & Gilman, 2005, p. 1; Menzel, 2007, p. 55), but in practice, it is difficult to know where the optimal balance lies (Demmke et al., 2020; Hoekstra, 2016; Huberts et al., 2014) and as indicated by Heywood and Rose (2016) also small additions of rules based measures (and the distrust they are based on) risk weaken a values-based system, which relies precisely on trust in staff/members as integral to secure reflective self-regulation and good governance. Moreover, it may also be difficult to classify ethics instruments as external or internal controls (Tremblay et al., 2017).

Therefore, doing the first mapping of ethics instruments, we focus on what ethics instruments parties use and their functions rather than deciding their overall balance between rules and values, although we consider this to some extent in the analysis.

In terms of how ethics mechanisms are put into effect, it is also important that they include participation and consultation practices (Tremblay et al., 2017) of sub-management organisational levels, which are key values in democratic governance, not least in political parties. Measures that members of an organisation themselves have been involved in formulating, implementing, and feeling ownership of are more likely to be successful than those inserted on them from the top (Anechiarico & Segal, 2020).

Based on this our model of analysis will focus on i) ethics instruments, structured upon their four functions, employed by parties to stimulate and enforce integrity and prevent ethics violations, and ii) processes and structures used to give effect to these instruments.

## Method and material

This is an explorative case study. We study the eight political parties represented in the Swedish parliament (the Centre Party, the Christian Democrats, the Green Party, the Left Party, the Liberals, the Moderate Party, the Social Democrats, and the Sweden Democrats). The analysis focus on Sweden as the case where parties are data units that provide examples of how they deal with the various functions of ethics management rather than being an outright party comparison.

The first step in data collection was to map instruments, processes and structures of ethics management using party statutes and party internal documents. This was part of an expert survey conducted among several European countries (*ETHICS project*) where we answered for the Swedish case. We also in some cases complemented our answers by consultations with party officials. This was followed-up with interviews in all parties (with the exception of the Liberal Party) of party secretaries or other senior officials that parties referred us to (see reference list). This allowed us to elaborate our understanding of the de facto use of ethics instruments, organisation and processes.

Interviews were conducted in a semi structured manner around predetermined themes, which constituted the segments of the interview (Galletta, 2013; Kallio et al., 2016). These segments correspond to the four functions of ethics instruments we explore. Each segment started with an open question. Follow-up questions then first concerned ethics instruments raised by the interviewee, and then issues not mentioned by the interviewee. This ensured allowing for new aspects to be brought up while also ensuring the coverage of predetermined aspects and questions that we wanted to explore under each segment but without skewing the interviewee towards any particular instrument. Interviewees were provided with the themes (with some examples under each theme) about a week before the interviews. Interviews were conducted and recorded with zoom. Audio files were first transcribed using N-vivo transcription and then edited by the authors to improve accuracy. All interviews, data collection, and analysis were conducted by the authors.

## Results

We first present overall results for the ethics instruments applied by parties and the processes they use. Then this is elaborated with more detailed examples and discussion for each of the four functions of the ethics instrument. This is also presented in [Table 1](#).

Firstly, our results indicate that parties increasingly use formal ethical guidelines to define integrity in their organisations, with five out of ten now having separate ethical guidelines/codes but also that party representatives view integrity as strongly related to ideological norms as defined in party programmes and statutes. Secondly, to guide candidates towards integrity formalised pre-electoral integrity pledges—and similar declarations—are not only increasingly used by almost all parties but have also increasingly expanded in scope. Besides these instruments, parties very often use tutorials, education and/or training for both regular members and holders of key positions (not least members of nomination committees).

Thirdly, instruments for monitoring ethics are relatively well-developed but tend to be reactive (e.g., after the Me-Too movement) and not very strong. These include whistle-blowing policies and in some cases enhanced demands for disclosure of private interests and conflict of interest, of investigations by local and regional nomination committees (more and more with the support of manuals and interview guidelines formed at the central party level) as well as survey-measurement of integrity violations and organisational climate.

Fourthly, tools for enforcing integrity are few and often concentrated on formal expulsion procedures, which in most parties are rarely used. All parties designate a specific body responsible for such internal disciplinary matters, including ethics violations or dispute resolution regarding the application of statutes. One common trait—with only two exceptions (the Left Party and in

Table 1. Ethics management instruments for each party according to functions.

Party	Determining & defining integrity	Guiding towards integrity	Monitoring integrity	Enforcing integrity
Centre Party	Partial code of conduct on social media behaviour (from 2018); Harassment policy (from 2017); Party statutes; Idea program.	Candidate integrity pledges (new members); Leadership training (elected); Guidelines for candidates and elected representatives; Contribution policy; Nomination committees (cf. right column).	Both an anonymous whistle-blowing system and a non-anonymous notification process to special group (led by the party's head of security); Employee surveys (regular); External evaluation (during 2021) of the harassment policy; Nomination committees (review of candidates).	Party board can investigate if a member (or a local/regional part of the party) deviates from the statutes (with expulsion as final sanction); In cases of lost confidence a district/regional/party board – in concurrence with the local/regional/national party group – may ask an elected member to resign from office (stated in candidate integrity pledges). Party board adjudicates expulsion from party and other internal disciplinary matters.
Christian Democrats	Party statutes (no separate ethics code).	Candidate integrity pledges (centralized and same for all candidates) and training (decentralized to local party organisations – except for top candidates to the national parliament); Selection of candidates (same as training).	Employee surveys; Non-anonymous email address to report harassments; Selection of candidates (same as training, cf. left column).	
Green Party	Ethical guidelines (from 2020, applies to whole party); Party statutes.	Candidate integrity pledges (to which the ethical guidelines are attached), since 2018 also at regional and local levels; Education for parliamentary election candidates (education material also used at lower organisational levels).	Nomination committees (selection and review of candidates); Working committee of party board that supports the organisation when dealing with potential problems caused by party members; Reporting mechanisms that allows a whistle blower to stay anonymous outside the complaint receiving body.	A spectrum of sanctions including expulsion (a last resort, against a member intentionally working against the party or seriously hurting it, including harassing another member or employee) and a temporary ban (max 4 years) from nomination to elected positions. Expulsion may also concern a local branch that violates party statutes or acts disloyal. Party Board decides on these matters. More informal sanctions (e.g., reprimands) can also be used.
Left Party	Policy against sexual harassment (from 2018); Party tax; Party statutes.	Leadership training (for e.g., chairmen in party districts) and manuals for different roles both for elected members and employees (chairmen, cashiers, etc); Several surveys (mostly on policy issues) and a larger ad hoc survey (in 2019); Tutorial for nomination committees and their work.	Auditors; Nomination committees; Party statutes; Non-anonymous contact processes to report wrongdoings, harassments, etc.; Member surveys on harassments (in 2017, after Me-Too).	Party board acts as a general disciplinary body that also addresses ethical matters (including expulsions, which can be appealed to the party congress); Not paying the party tax for elected members is not ground for expulsion (but it always leads to serious nomination sanctions, i.e., not been put up on election lists); In case a local party group loses confidence for an elected member he/she may be asked by the group/district to resign or even leave the party.

*(continued)*



Table 1. Continued.

Party	Determining & defining integrity	Guiding towards integrity	Monitoring integrity	Enforcing integrity
Liberals*	Ethical guidelines for candidates, elected representatives and employees (from 2005 revised 2013 and 2021); Party statutes.	Candidate integrity pledges; Independent ethics committee (which can advise on the interpretation and application of the party's guidelines, cf. left column); Each regional district has an ethics officer to support the work with ethics issues in e.g., local districts (training in ethics is provided by the central/national organizational level).	Independent ethics committee (which can monitor the party's work on ethics); party statutes stipulate that if a dispute over ethical issues appears between a candidate/elected representative and party's leadership – whether local, regional or national – advise from the regional ethics officer or the ethics committee should be obtained.	A member may be expelled by his/her regional district board or the party board. If expulsion is deemed too harsh, a warning may be handed down by either board. If expulsion is decided by a regional board, the member may appeal to the party board (within 6 weeks) which has the final say.
Moderate Party	Ethics policy (from 2009, minor revision 2013); Policy against abusive discrimination (from 2020 – for employees); Party statutes.	Candidate integrity pledges; Basic web-based training tools (both new members and candidates); Checklist with questions for nomination committees (cf. right column).	Employee surveys (every two years); Larger ad hoc member survey (e.g., in 2018 following the Me-Too movement); Dialogue between members and chairpersons of local party boards; Checklist with questions for nomination committees (review of candidates).	Party board adjudicates expulsion from party and other internal disciplinary matters; In case a local party group loses confidence for an elected member he/she must resign from office (stated in candidate integrity pledge); Minor dips in confidence may lead to informal sanctions e.g., in nomination/election list processes.
Social Democrats	Certain levels/groups (e.g., parliament and church council) have ethical guidelines; Leadership idea (adopted in 2018 by the party board); Party statutes; Party programme.	Candidate integrity pledges; Leadership education/training with concrete ethical dilemmas; Biannual surveys – organized by an external actor – for a large (around 9 000) randomized number of members (on values and level of participation in deliberations in party meetings; but also harassment questions); Education for members candidates and members of nomination committees.	Biannual surveys (cf. left column); Some local districts have “follow-up interviews” with elected candidates (on the basis of e.g., the candidate integrity pledges) and nomination committees review candidates; Anonymous whistle-blowing system (specific email which only 2 persons have access to).	Party board adjudicates expulsion (which requires a 3/4 majority) from party – after initial assessment from the expulsion commission – and other internal disciplinary matters; Some informal sanctions include e.g., feedback during “follow-up interviews” (cf. left column) or even non-renewal of party positions such as chairmanship (some districts have shortened election terms – e.g., to one year – in order to establish these).
Sweden Democrats	Ethical guidelines (from 2011, revised in 2019); Party statutes.	Education/training in ethical dilemmas/situations (incl. crisis management); Candidate integrity pledges (with declaration of good conduct and extensive disclosure of e.g., previous criminal records, substance abuse treatment or psychiatric care).	Employee and MP-surveys (anonymous and externally administered) at the national level (parliament); System of self-disclosure (regarding updating the candidate integrity pledge); Candidacy committee reviews candidates with prior financial/criminal burdens (and approves/rejects the candidacy); Scrutiny by leading party members (e.g., chairperson in party districts); Non-anonymous notification process to the closest manager/leader.	Party board adjudicates expulsion from party – after initial assessment from the membership committee – and other internal disciplinary matters.

Source: adapted from Maesschalck and Bertok (2009, p. 28).

\*The information about the Liberals is only based on written sources and not complemented by an interview as is the case for the other parties.

some cases, see Table 1, the Liberals)—is that this body’s decisions are final and not subject to appeal. This is somewhat surprising considering the propensity for other organisations and domains of public life (whether in sports or civil law, etc) to create appeals possibilities.

Finally, these overall results and developments are based on parties using a mix of rules-based and values-based instruments thus aiming both at preventing the don’ts (i.e., breaking rules) and promoting the dos (i.e., fostering integrity).

### **Determining and defining ethics**

All parties’ representatives interviewed pointed to the party’s programme and statutes as a source of prevailing ethics and good behaviour within the party. While the emphasis on which are the most important traits of the party’s core ethic varied (e.g., the Left Party pointed to an internal party tax as a cornerstone of their definition of good and ethical behaviour), a central source which all party representatives referred to was the party ideology/programme. This indicates that ethical and political norms are viewed as closely intertwined in political parties. Another example is the perpetual discussion in the Green Party about how to live up to ideals regarding climate and environment in everyday life.

Most parties (5 out of 8) have gone further and adopted codes of conduct or ethics guidelines. The Liberals adopted their code in 2005 (and revised it 2013 and again in February 2021). The Sweden Democrats adopted theirs in 2011 and the Moderate Party in 2009 (and adopted again in 2013 but with almost no changes). In November 2020 the Moderates adopted a policy against discrimination. The Centre Party and the Green Party<sup>4</sup> adopted their guidelines in 2017 and 2020 respectively. These codes and guidelines also vary in levels of detail and in content. Thus, the Sweden Democrats’ ethical guidelines seem to focus on three aspects centred on information about what happens if a member does not follow the party statutes or harms the party, how to handle a situation negative for the party or the member and the difference in responsibilities between a candidate or member elected to office versus a regular member. A similar rules-based and process-mapping content regarding different aspects are found in the Liberals’ ethical guidelines. Thus, they contain descriptions of rules and preferred behaviour in situations of campaign financing, political debates—both internal in nomination processes and external towards other parties—and situations of “... political or moral distress...” The Green Party’s ethical guidelines focus on describing—and thus conveying—four central concepts: interaction, internal democracy, trust and exercise of power. The Greens guidelines also seem to emphasise the party’s internal work and tasks, such as warning against faction building and tactical behaviour and advocating open democratic processes. The Sweden Democrats’ guidelines focus on the external dimensions of ethics, e.g., party representatives’ behaviour towards other parties; how the party, and members, are perceived by the public is at the core of the document. The Moderates’ ethics policy combines these internal and external perspectives, though its overall substance could be characterized more like a “conduct guidelines” rather than an “ethics code,” e.g., the policy includes a crisis management section.

All of the abovementioned codes/guidelines were adopted by the central party board (*partistyr-elsen*) and apply to everyone in the party organisation, thus all members, officials, candidates and representatives. As far as we have been able to ascertain none of the codes/guidelines applies to third parties (e.g., suppliers, sponsors, think tanks or foundations) linked to the parties. The Centre Party has adopted both a partial code of conduct regarding behaviour on social media in June 2018 and a policy regarding harassment (sexual as well as other types, e.g., discrimination or bullying) in September 2017. Overall, most of the five parties with guidelines/codes tend to lean towards a rules-based type, with the exception of the Green Party.

### Guiding towards ethics

Pre-electoral integrity pledges for candidates (*kandidatförsäkran*) are increasingly used as guiding mechanisms by parties. As far as we have been able to establish, all national parties except the Left Party have such specific pledges. These can be described as written pledges of loyalty and appropriate conduct that the parties require candidates to sign, though it seems that they have evolved over the years (see below). According to a report (Nielsen, 2007) commissioned by a state inquiry committee, such integrity pledges were prior to the 2006 election centrally initiated by two parties, the Social Democrats and the Moderates. According to Nielsen (2007, p. 104) these integrity pledges could be—and were in some cases actually—invoked in order to either reprimand or exclude candidates, most often when they had made campaign statements which deviated significantly from party policies and values. A previous state inquiry committee report (Möller, 1999) observed that some parties used integrity pledges for candidates but mostly at regional levels. These early forms of integrity pledges predominantly demanded that candidates abided by party lines while requirements on ethical or similar aspects (such as past criminal offences, etc) were not included.

While current integrity pledges vary, they have some common themes. Primarily among them is that a candidate (i) acts as a role model and good representative and follows the party's ethical guidelines; (ii) actively participates in party activities, such as election campaigns and training/courses; (iii) informs the party leadership in case of upcoming situations which may harm the party or the candidate, (iv) leaves elected office in case of a vote of no-confidence amongst the party's political group (whether in parliament or local government councils) or upon a conviction for a crime other than a minor offense. In other aspects, integrity pledges differ across parties, e.g., three parties (Moderates, Liberals and Greens<sup>5</sup>) explicitly comment and give guidance to candidates on how to handle personal votes campaign. For two parties (Social Democrats and Greens), their pledges contain separate rules of conduct for candidates and elected representatives. The Sweden Democrats labels its integrity pledge a “declaration of good conduct” (*vandelsförsäkran*) and it is more demanding, as it requires candidates to disclose not only previous forced treatments for addiction but also previous psychiatric care treatments and payment remarks.

All parties organise some form of training, education and courses on different aspects of members' and elected party representatives' missions. It is however unclear to which extent and intensity these training courses actually delve into ethical aspects or contain various kinds of dilemma workshops. The Liberals' party statutes explicitly mandate each regional district to have a special ethics officer (which supports local districts in ethical issues). Moreover, we noted, and some interviewees themselves emphasised, the importance parties pay to the prevention of ethics violations.

### Monitoring ethics

All parties use some kind of screening and selection mechanisms for their candidates. This is mostly done by regional and local party entities, but in most parties, the central level provides the regional and local districts with templates for in-depth interviews of candidates. These interviews are conducted by nomination committees at local and regional levels. The level of intensity in those interviews seems to vary, though our overall assessment is that these differences are relatively small. A common ambition across parties for these interviews is to attain knowledge of any potential “closet skeletons” in candidates' backgrounds. The Sweden Democrats complement this with a demand for both an excerpt from the national police's criminal record and—since 2018—a credit history report.

Completely anonymous whistle-blower functions are available in two parties (Centre Party and Social Democrats). Other parties have processes with some level of anonymity, like providing

anonymity for the whistle-blower outside the body receiving the information (e.g., the Green Party). Surveys regarding ethical violations and conduct in violation of the party's codes or norms on good behaviour (ranging from harassment or corruption to discrimination or bullying) are common in all parties but their specific implementation differs somewhat between parties. In the Liberals, the party board appoints an independent ethics committee, which works preventively (but can also monitor the party's work on ethics) and, if necessary, propose changes to the party's ethical guidelines. Its candidates, elected representatives and employees can turn to this committee for advice on the interpretation and application of the party's guidelines.

### **Enforcing ethics**

The statutes of all parliamentary parties designate the party board, which is elected by their party conferences, to be responsible for internal disciplinary matters or dispute resolution resulting from the application of its statutes. There are minor variations in how issues of exclusions of members are handled. Some parties let a subordinate body such as an exclusion committee prepare the dossier of any exclusion (e.g., Sweden Democrats and Social Democrats). In some parties (e.g., Left Party and Social Democrats) an executive committee within the party board (or the board itself – e.g., Sweden Democrats) can temporarily suspend a member while the exclusion case is handled/prepared. The Social Democrats also have a short list of specific accusations (e.g., disloyal behaviour in a union conflict or membership of another political party) where the statutes grant the right to a smaller executive committee within the party board to decide on exclusion (albeit unanimously and not by the three-fourth majority required in regular party board exclusion decisions).

Most parties' statutes on exclusion do not allow for this kind of decision to be subject to review by another statutory body. The Left Party is one exception, where all expulsions are reported to the party congress and if a congress delegate calls for the decision's upheaval or if the expelled member appeals the expulsion then the issue is finally resolved by the congress.

The Liberals statutes give the possibility for both the party board and a local branch to exclude a member (in the latter case the expelled member can appeal to the party board) or to issue a warning (if exclusion appears too harsh). In terms of enforcement, only another party—the Green Party—also boasts a spectrum of formal sanctions. Thus, the party board can decide by a two-thirds majority to suspend a member from nomination to elected office for up to four years or to exclude a member. The party's statute explicitly states that exclusion should be the last resort and a less restrictive sanction should be selected if sufficient. The Green Party also has detailed rules for conflict resolution within a local party branch (these rules were developed on the account of a specific complicated conflict situation in northern Sweden). If a local branch e.g., seriously violates the party statutes or acts disloyal to the party, the party board may, if no other measure is sufficient, expulse that branch by a two-third majority.

### **Conclusion**

Our results indicate that Swedish parties, as part of their ethics management strategies, use several ethics instruments, both rules and values based, to define what is ethical conduct and governance in their organisations, guide members toward such conduct, monitor behaviour, and enforce ethics. These instruments thus both aim to prevent corruption and other illegal activities, and to promote good behaviour in general and action in line with the values of parties. We note how parties increasingly use formal ethical guidelines (ethics codes) to define what is ethical conduct and pre-electoral integrity pledges to guide their candidates. Instruments for monitoring ethics are relatively well developed but reactive, while instruments for the enforcement of integrity are few and tend to concern seldom used formal expulsion procedures.

As concerns processes to make these instruments effective some parties have organized broader processes and structures for both the analysis of ethical dilemmas and the creation and adaptation of ethics instruments, while the consultation of members, staff, and stakeholders within the party structure in this regard seems overall weak. Sometimes regional representatives give feedback to the central level (mainly through meetings with the party secretaries), but this is seldom put in the very foreground of the party's business. Instead, both the shaping of new ethics instruments and adjusting failing or otherwise poor existing instruments are often caused by a specific event. The practical work in these developments is often delegated to a special group and sometimes influenced by individual members' initiative and pathos for these issues. This was the case in the Green Party where some members actively promoted the adoption of ethical guidelines.

While most of the eight parties have roughly evolved and taken similar steps, the reasons behind the introductions or changing of new and old ethics mechanisms seem—for many of the parties—to be a combination of external factors common with other parties and party specific events and conditions. In some cases, internal events and ensuing debates gave life to intramural forces which created both demands and solutions to these events. In other cases, parties have been the object of sizeable external forces and debate which created a need to counteract and remedy perceived lack in ethics management, mainly because of scandals or cases of legal and/or moral improprieties.

If we put these results in the Swedish context of the last 15 years, parties have made incremental changes and development in their ethics management structures and processes, which has been in the direction of more formal ethics management. This follows—but is not necessarily causally contingent on—the formal advancements in the transparency of party funding and regimes of asset declarations for political actors at the national level (not least MPs). Several other changes in society have happened that affect organisations in general, for example, changing norms concerning what behaviour is regarded as acceptable in relation to the opposite gender and new communication technologies make it easier both to reveal ethics violations, record them and make them public. Presence on the internet is now ubiquitous. Moreover, for parties, these developments have evolved against the backdrop of challenging trends in the Swedish electorate: eroding party identification and increasing last minute voting decisions. These factors, we argue, increase the vulnerability of parties not able to “keep up” with rising integrity standards.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that these conclusions about ethics management in parties are exploratory and our future research ambition is to further explore them, particularly in relation to two aspects. First, we note the broad range of behaviour and activities that ethics management in parties deal with. We want to explore further with what balance they combine values and rules-based approaches and in particular how values based instruments are used. As noted by Heywood and Rose (2016), also in situations when organisations have a mix of rules based and values based measures (which most organisations including parties have), the introduction of more rules measures, and the distrust of organisational members/staff upon which they depend, may undermine the foundation of values based measures as they depend on trust to maintain integrity (by using various mechanisms to develop and support the ability of members/staff applying their judgement in tricky situations). Secondly, party representatives themselves indicate that integrity issues are viewed as closely related to their party programmes and statutes, i.e., the ideological foundations of parties. Studying to what extent this affects what instruments parties apply for various integrity functions, and how, would allow us to explore whether there is a relationship between the left-right dimension and parties' preferences for values based versus rules based ethics management.

## Notes

1. Since the 1960s, Swedish parties receive significant public funding (even at local levels). Nationally, most parties on average finance around 60 percent of their activities (for regular years) through state subsidies based on the number of seats each party has in parliament. The share of public funding is lower, roughly 50 percent, in election years because of donations.

2. Since 2007 parties represented in the Swedish parliament have around 260,000 members.
3. We use Huberts (2014, p. 5) definition of ethics violations as “behaviour that violates the relevant moral values and norms.” For a typology of integrity violations see Huberts and Lasthuizen (2014, p. 131).
4. A notable fact is that the Green Party had in previous party programmes—as early as 1994—a section with proposals for ethical rules for *all* elected politicians, e.g. that each candidate should—publicly and prior to nomination—state diverging views between him/her and the party’s programme.
5. At least regarding local guidelines for personal voting in the regional county of Kalmar. At the national level and at least before 2005, the Greens did not use integrity pledges as a part of their guidelines for personal votes campaigns, see Andersson (2004, p. 305).

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