

Palme Academy Introductory Course: **Module 1**

HOW TO RUN AND REPRESENT A PARTY

**FORMING AND**

**STRUCTURING**

**A PARTY**

Ideological base, party constitution and organisational structure

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# Introduction

## What is a political party?

In most democratic political systems in the world, political parties play a crucial role in the way in which democracy functions. It is political parties that stand for election, who provide lists of candidates, and who write policy platforms for voters to consider. It is political parties that legislate and make decisions that affect all citizens. It is political parties that can be held accountable for their decisions and whose power can be taken away in free and fair elections.

Political parties function as a link between citizens and political power. They organise people so that they can have a role in making political decisions. They can bring together voters, make them members, educate them on social issues, and mobilise them to make their own voices heard. When political parties function well, they are not only involved in creating policy in parliaments or running campaigns, they also help to make political and democratic influence a living reality for more people. They become a tool for people to influence social development, and to take control over their own lives.

### What kind of party does a social democratic party aim to be?

There are many different types of models for political parties. If you want to learn more about how to form and develop a party, you will first need to define what party model you intend to use. Is it a party that consists mainly of a group of elected politicians representing various interest groups? Is it a party controlled from the top down – termed a cadre party? Or is it perhaps a populist party centred around a strong leader, with supporters rather than full members in the party's base?

In this course material, we of course assume that a social democratic party is basically and ought to be a popular movement party where the power in the party derives from its members and moves upwards through its organisation. It needs an inclusive and democratic way of working that features internal democracy, representativeness, and transparency.

The basis of such a party is the democratic grass roots movement and substantial popular participation. It is a party that brings together people of flesh and blood, who have commitment and a common vision of how our society should function and develop. In this sense, there is no

difference between a popular movement party and other popular movements. People join forces to play football or put on plays in a theatre group, to form a cooperative, or to learn to sew or weave. Those who want to be involved in changing the conditions under which people live in a broader sense become active in a political party. That is the foundation of a popular movement party.

The organisational focus of such a party is on developing strong local structures with a lot of active members. It is based on the idea that parties in a democracy should not only play an important role in parliaments but also in the surrounding community and civil society. Political parties, especially if they are also in power, are often seen as representatives of parliament or the government and not as representatives of people in everyday life. In order to avoid this situation, parties must create broad, inclusive organisations with democratic structures and ensure that they work in a way that is visible and which makes a difference in people's everyday lives.

### *But how do you do that?*

Democratic parties in different parts of the world can learn a lot from each other's experiences and practices.

This introductory course and its modules focus on how a party can strengthen its organisational and political capacity to become a strong and democratic party with active members and inclusive structures and activities. The strength of a party depends to a large extent on how democratic it is and how well the organisation functions. This requires organisational structures and ways of working that function well, and a culture of openness to people actively sharing in and participating in the political work of the party. A strong democratic party that is confident in itself encourages debate, active participation and criticism, and self-criticism.



## An introductory course in forming a party

This course is intended to provide an introduction to and an overview of how to form, organise, develop, and represent this kind of democratic popular movement party – from the top down and the bottom up.

Its target group is leaders and active members of social democratic parties. You might be leaders in many different areas at the national, regional, or local level. This course emphasises the local level, however, since the local level forms the base of a social democratic popular movement party, and is the level that involves the most people. The material for this course is also useful for active members who are not leaders, in which case it can be used for self-study or as part of local member courses.

### A six-module course

The course is divided into six self-contained modules. Each module has its own course material, which is intended to be used for two or three meetings of leaders and others in the party in the form of a study circle to discuss the questions and ideas that the module raises. But the number of meetings to cover each module is flexible. One

meeting per module is also an option, although you will then need to pick out which of the topics and questions you are going to discuss, as you will probably not have time to cover everything. As a participant, you can of course choose to take the entire course or to focus specifically on one of its modules.

### The six modules in this introductory course are:

#### Module 1

Forming and Structuring a party

#### Module 2

Holding Elections and Reaching Decisions

#### Module 3

Formulating Policy and Leading the Way

#### Module 4

Reaching Out and Connecting

#### Module 5

Growing and Consolidating

#### Module 6

Representing and Governing

# Module 1 – Forming and Structuring a party

This first module looks at the fundamentals of a party constitution and deals with the basic structures and organisation of a political party. The need for ideology, constitutional frameworks, and rules as well as the importance of the party having a clear organisational structure.

A political party that is careless with these fundamental building blocks will find it difficult to function and to be effective and democratic. This module is divided into three parts.

**The first part** is about ideology. What role does ideology play in a party and what opportunities do thoughtful analyses and values give to a party, both in terms of the task of organising people and when policy is formulated? But it also focuses on the question of what the risks are for those who allow the formalities to become more important than reality. In this part, we briefly look at the fundamentals of social democratic ideology. It also shows how you can utilise party platforms and the development of the party's political ideology.

**The second part** focuses on what kind of party a

social democratic party is, or ought to be, and what the basic structure of the party might be in order to live up to that aim. It also addresses the need for constitutions that can be applied in practice, and provides examples of how regular work on revising and rewriting the constitution can be organised so that it functions well.

**The third part** deals with basic organisational structure – the formation of a party at the local, regional, and national level in practical terms. This part takes up the importance of being flexible in one's view of how the organisation might be structured, without thereby compromising on transparency or the fundamentals of a democracy.

The goal of the first module, once completed, is that you will have gained a greater insight into how people with the same political vision can form and develop a political party, acquire a greater understanding of the fundamental work of political parties with ideology and ideological development; the party's constitution and constitutional issues, and its organisational structures – as well as how to work on these matters in practice with others.

The goal is also that the module will provide an opportunity for you as a group to assess, discuss and plan how to work in your own party in these areas, in particular how you might start to develop your local party structure.



The Swedish Social Democrats' Party Chair Stefan Löfven with Party Secretary Lena Rådström Baastad, Minister of Finance Magdalena Andersson and members of the Swedish Social Democratic Youth Union.



## BASED ON THE SWEDISH EXPERIENCE

This course is based on the experiences and organisation of social democracy in Sweden. In other words, it is not meant to be a blueprint. The circumstances for political parties are different in different parts of the world. Economic development will have progressed to different levels. The political conflict lines will be different. In some countries, ethnic conflict lines are very apparent. In others, class conflicts are the most predominant. In some countries, the political process is prejudiced by an earlier or ongoing struggle for freedom. In a country without a long tradition of a multi-party system, or in a relatively young democracy, the challenges are different from those in countries where democratic elections have been held over a long period of time. As a participant in this course, you may utilise the experiences of Sweden's social democratic movement and the ways it is organised. These experiences can then be applied to your own environment and adapted to your own experiences and circumstances.

That said, we would like to emphasise that the experiences of social democracy in Sweden can be of interest to study in other parts of the world. Sweden's Social Democratic Party has long experience of winning elections and being in government, always by virtue of being the biggest party. The membership of Sweden's Social Democratic Party has been consistently large. The party has had regional and local branches throughout the country for a

long time and, in collaboration with other parts of civil society, has often been able to dominate the political agenda. A brief explanation for this strong position is that the party has been successful in bringing together large groups in society around a common, future-focused and solidarity-based social narrative, and through having a consistent goal to grow and change in pace with societal development.

This does not mean that there are no challenges left for social democracy in Sweden. On the contrary. In recent decades, the labour market has changed dramatically. Traditional working-class occupations have become fewer. After several decades of neoliberalism, nationalism and more traditional values have become a new factor in politics, and have increased support for conservative parties. At the same time, strongly growing individualism, particularly in the larger cities, continues to attract voters to more liberal parties. More and more citizens are also choosing alternative forms of political engagement in single-issue organisations (e.g. the environment, feminism or migration). It is more difficult to get people to get involved in party politics, to sit on an Executive, and to take on time-consuming official roles. These are the challenges facing many political parties today.

In short, a party must always be flexible and ready to innovate in line with societal development. We are all part of an ongoing learning process. This is why it is

so enjoyable and challenging to be part of a political party.

### Things to bear in mind

How a party is organised at different levels in the society varies from country to country. In some cases there may be more levels; and in others, there may be fewer. This module presents the models for the structure of the Swedish Social Democratic Party's organisation. So you will find that there may be differences in the structure of the party organisation in your country. If you do not recognise your party's model in this module, then you should try to match the levels described here to your party's structure and explain why your party is organised in this way. The important thing here is to understand how the party organisation's fundamental decision-making levels are linked to and function in tandem with the society in which it operates, and internally with the organisational levels in the party.

There may also be differences in the local branch. The local branch is the party's base and every party member must belong to a local branch. In the Swedish Social Democratic Party, this level is called the *arbetarekommun*, and corresponds to one of Sweden's 290 local government areas (municipalities). One local branch of the party per LGA/municipality. There may also be underlying social democratic associations and clubs that together form the local branch. ■

## FACTS

### THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN SWEDEN

The Swedish Social Democratic Party was formed in 1889 as part of a broader popular movement and organising process with the aim of demanding political and economic rights for workers. The party's founders included trade union organisations who believed that the labour movement needed a voice in parliament. In the first few years, it was about demanding democracy, universal suffrage, and better social conditions for workers. The party formed its first government in 1920 and has since then been in government for a total of over 70 years. During these years, the party's main project has been to develop, and further develop, within the framework

of 'the Swedish model' – a modern welfare state aimed at increasing citizens' equality, social security and freedom. For a long time, there were only five parties in Sweden's *Riksdag* (national parliament) and the Social Democrats often received over 40 per cent of the votes in elections. Today there are more parties and the Social Democrats Party has lost some of its broad support, and often has to form coalitions with other parties in order to be able to govern.

**90,000 members**  
**290 local branches**  
**26 regional organisations**

The party currently has about 90,000 members who are organised in 290 local branches (*Arbetarekommuner*). Under these are a large number of associations and clubs, in residential areas and city districts in particular, which together with the local branch make up the basic organisation of the party. The local branches are in turn organised into 26 regional organisations called Party Districts (*Partidistrikt*). The party is classed as a mass-based party and its organisation is based on federal principles, where the regional organisations together constitute the party nationally, with the National Conference as the highest decision-making body. ■



# Ideology and party platforms

Social democratic politics is based on social democratic ideology. It may seem obvious, but is it really? No, not for everyone! On the contrary, many people believe that ideologies have had their day and are no longer relevant. That they are no longer needed, not interesting to the voters or that political parties no longer care about them.

*One such view* is that most parties have congregated in the political centre and are striving for roughly the same things and that what divides the parties are concrete issues – not underlying values or a long-term vision for society.

*Another view* is that common sense is enough in politics. That all political conflicts can be resolved by the application of logic and rationality, and that ideologies are just a smokescreen that clouds the view.

*A third view* is that ideologies are only relevant within a specific social context. That they are a Western idea, systems of thought which are all the product of the European Enlightenment, the French Revolution and industrialisa-

tion in the 18th and 19th centuries. For other parts of the world, no one is interested in ideologies.

All these objections to an all too slavish faith in the importance of traditional ideologies are worth taking seriously. In large parts of the world, political debate has emerged in a completely different kind of society from that in Europe. New perspectives have replaced the right–left spectrum. And of course it is true that the voters vote for the parties and politicians they hope can deliver the best policy on concrete issues. But do these objections really constitute a fatal blow to the very need for ideology? No. But to understand why, we must first look at what an ideology actually is.



# What is an ideology?

The simple definition of an ideology is that it is a coherent system of ideas and values that:

- 1 Analyses the current state of a society – what are the basic political conflict lines, what are people’s main drivers and what are their relationships
- 2 Tells us how the society has become the way it is – in other words, what historical events, decisions and processes have led to us getting the society we live in right now.
- 3 Describes what an ‘ideal society’ ought to be.
- 4 Outlines what policies need to be implemented today and what steps we ought to take to change society in the desired direction

Everyone has an opinion on the fourth point: policy on concrete issues. But people’s political views are not formed in a vacuum devoid of values. Our opinions on policy issues are largely guided by our basic assumptions, expressed in more or less concrete ways, and our own analysis of today’s society. In other words, most people have an ideology, even if it is not always directly expressed or thought about in detail.

If you study political history, it is also clear that political parties and movements that have survived for a long time, those that have been able to bring together large groups of people and really change society, have all based their political practice on an ideology and a vision of where they are headed. Apparently, it is simply easier to keep people engaged over time in a long-term and meaningful process of change if it is clear what fundamental values you have, and what you want your society to be like in a general sense.

An ideology sums up a party’s values and our social analysis, our dreams and visions. An ideology also creates a context for the whole raft of policies and principles that a party has. A party that spits out policies without any underlying principles will find it more difficult to convince voters and members than a party that shows a clear path forward.

## What is social democracy?

Social democratic ideology is based on the three concepts of **freedom**, **equality**, and **solidarity**, and that all three of these concepts are fundamental prerequisites for a functioning democracy. At the same time, democracy is the system that can create more freedom, equality, and solidarity per se. In other words, there is a mutual interdependence between these three concepts and democracy.

Social democracy as an ideology has taken inspiration from several other areas of the ideological field. From

traditional socialist analysis, in particular a Marxist analysis, social democracy has taken on the view of the importance of labour. The conflict between labour and capital plays an important role in a capitalist society. People’s work is central to the productive forces in the society as well as to the individual’s freedom, development and functioning as a social being. Early in its history, there was a divergence between two different branches of socialism: the revolutionary, Communist branch, that wants to see a rapid, revolutionary, and violent transformation of society; and the other branch, social democracy, which defends democracy and transparency, is pragmatic and reformist, and aims for gradual, sustainable social reforms.

## Freedom

The concept of freedom is about the individual having control over their own life and making independent choices. This requires the existence of civil and political rights, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and freedom of association. It also requires the existence of individual rights, such as the right to choose an occupation, education, a partner to share one’s life with, and the right to relocate and to move freely across borders. The concept of freedom also includes freedom from a number of things, such as freedom from oppression, freedom from hunger and malnutrition, and freedom from an environment that can harm your health. Social democracy and liberalism share much of this ideological base.

Social democracy has a dual perspective on freedom. The individual’s control over their own life and informed, independent choices is not just about the right to these things. It is also a question of creating the right social conditions so that the individual has the opportunity to make these choices. And this requires working together towards solutions at the level of the society as a whole. For example, it requires a well-developed school system, health care and active measures to combat unemployment and poverty.



This is where social democracy's concept of freedom often conflicts with the views of classical liberalism, or indeed neoliberalism. For these views, the active creation of opportunities through taxes, rules and collective solutions entails a limitation on the freedom of economically and socially powerful groups. They do not perceive that there can be a conflict between the freedoms of different people or groups. For them, the worker's freedom to take a low-paid job, or to refrain from taking such a job, is equal to the employer's freedom to offer the job. Despite the fact that in practice it may be a job that the employee has to take in order to survive because there are no realistic alternatives. And despite the fact that the employee and the employer have completely different power.

Social democracy's view of freedom is about creating equal conditions so that there can be actual freedom. It recognises that people in a society are interdependent and that not all people can get exactly what they want at every single moment. It also believes that democracy is the best way to resolve the various conflicts of interest that can arise as a result of this interdependence.

### Equality

The most fundamental form of equality is political equality – everyone's equal right to participate and influence the society. Or, if you like, democracy. Equality is also about equality before the law. A fair and equal legal system convicts and sentences people based on their actions, regardless of who they are or what their background is. A system that takes into account such considerations as who the person is and their background always tends to favour the economically and socially advantaged. But social democracy's version of equality also deals with these economic and social conditions. As we have already seen, the political right often claims that freedom and equality are mutually exclusive, that increasing equality reduces freedom. On the contrary, social democracy claims that they are each other's prerequisites. A very unequal society offers freedom only to the most privileged. The Swedish



Social Democratic Party platform defines equality as “everyone's equal right to control their own life and influence the society in which they live.” It also maintains that an equal distribution of the society's resources is important for this to be achievable. This does not mean that everyone should live their lives exactly the same, or that everyone should have exactly the same amount of all the resources in the society. It is not about everyone having to make the same choices. Such a society would be totalitarian. Social democratic equality is about making the society so equal that everyone has the best opportunities possible to make the choices they want.

### Solidarity

In the labour movement's infancy, solidarity was the key to changing society. No single individual could take on the injustices of society on their own. It was only possible if workers united to do so. The whole idea behind trade unions is based on this belief. One by one, employees always end up in a position of disadvantage in relation to their employer. This insight is formulated in Sweden in the declaration known as 'The Trade Union Vow':

*“We do solemnly swear that we will never under any circumstances work for lower wages. Or under worse conditions than we now promise one another. We make this vow, in the secure knowledge, that if we all are true to our pledge, the employer will be forced to meet our demands!”*

There are countless examples of similar declarations of solidarity. Like the Bible's call to bear each other's burdens or why not the slogan of the Three Musketeers: “all for one and one for all!”

Solidarity is based on the insight that in a society we are all interdependent and that our own personal interests do not always have to come first. But it is also based on the relationship between those who are expected to make the society an equal one. In an unequal relationship, what looks like solidarity can easily get confused with charity.

In recent decades, social democracy has also been influenced by 'newer' ideologies. In particular, feminism, with women's rights at the heart of it, and environmentalism, with humanity's relationship with nature at the heart of it, have played a role in the development of social democracy's value base. This in turn has influenced the priorities and concrete policies of social democratic parties.

This renewal of the ideology is important. A living party must be able to capture new schools of thought in society that are important for the political conversation and which can influence its own ideology.

## THE CLASSICAL IDEOLOGIES

The three political ideologies commonly referred to as the classical ideologies are those that arose in the aftermath of the French Revolution in 1789. They are liberalism, conservatism, and socialism.

**Liberalism** emerged as a protest against the old, undemocratic social order. It emphasises the freedom of the individual and is generally associated with individual rights and freedoms, freedom of expression, private property rights, religious freedom, democracy, and free enterprise with a market economy. A number of branches have emerged from liberalism, such as social liberalism, which emphasises social issues, and neo-liberalism, which advocates what is termed a night-watchman state, where the role of the state and legislators is limited to protecting the individual against oppression and violence, and the rest is left to the citizens to manage on their own. In many countries, including the United States, the term 'liberal' has come to be associated with the 'left' – then referring to social liberalism, which has highlighted the importance of welfare; or to political liberalism, which emphasised individual political freedoms, such

as freedom of expression, freedom of religion and association, and the right to vote in democratic elections.

**Conservatism** was formulated as a reaction to the French Revolution and the rapid changes that swept through European societies in the late 1700s and early 1800s. It emphasises the value of slow change in society, with respect for the customs and customary practices that have emerged over time. Conservatives often emphasise the nation and the importance of traditional hierarchies. Sometimes, 'conservative' also means a general resistance to disturbing the status quo, and in that sense, the other ideologies too can be conservative if they operate in a society in which their platforms prevail.

**Socialism** emerged as a protest against social and political inequalities in the society of the 1800s and early 1900s, and demanded democratic elections and social reforms. The ideology of socialism is based on a materialistic view of history. This means that the way in which a society is organised for work and production also influences the society's

political values, traditions, and culture. Socialism built its social base on the working class and has often unfolded in the form of big social movements. Socialism has also developed in different directions. One branch is communism, which demands more rapid change and often emphasises revolution as an instrument for change. It has traditionally not been democratic, but has emerged as 'cadre parties' with an elitist view of the organisation. Another branch is social democracy, which emerged with reformism as its main method and with a fundamentally democratic outlook.

Regional forms under these three ideological umbrellas have also emerged in which the circumstances and conditions of life on the ground have influenced the interpretation of the overarching ideology. One such example was Ujamaa (meaning familyhood in Swahili), which was a model developed in Tanzania in the 1960s. This model differed from both the capitalist model in the West and the totalitarian model in the East, and was based on the development of small rural villages.



## GAL-TAN AND NEW CONFLICT LINES

The classical ideologies can be placed on the political left–right spectrum, where conservatives and economic neoliberals are usually placed on the right and socialist on the left. Typically, some of the clearest left–right conflicts include:

- Equality of opportunities and outcomes vs. equal rights
- Collective rights vs. individual rights
- Distribution of wealth and income vs. accepting inequality as a result of different choices in a market
- An active economic and labour market policy vs. leaving the market to its own devices.

In recent years, there has been more and more frequent talk of a new spectrum of values in politics, the GAL-TAN spectrum, where GAL stands for Green-Alternative-Libertarian and TAN stands for Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist. New parties that profile themselves along the GAL-TAN spectrum have also been formed and grown strong. Here, the political conflict lines can instead be between:

- The right to move freely across borders vs. nationalistic demands for closed borders
- The right to make your own choices concerning lifestyle and sexuality vs. traditional family values
- Support for global political solutions vs. national self-interest
- Environmental considerations and ecology vs. growth and pure economic interests
- Gender equality and the fight for women's rights vs. a patriarchal view of the family and society.

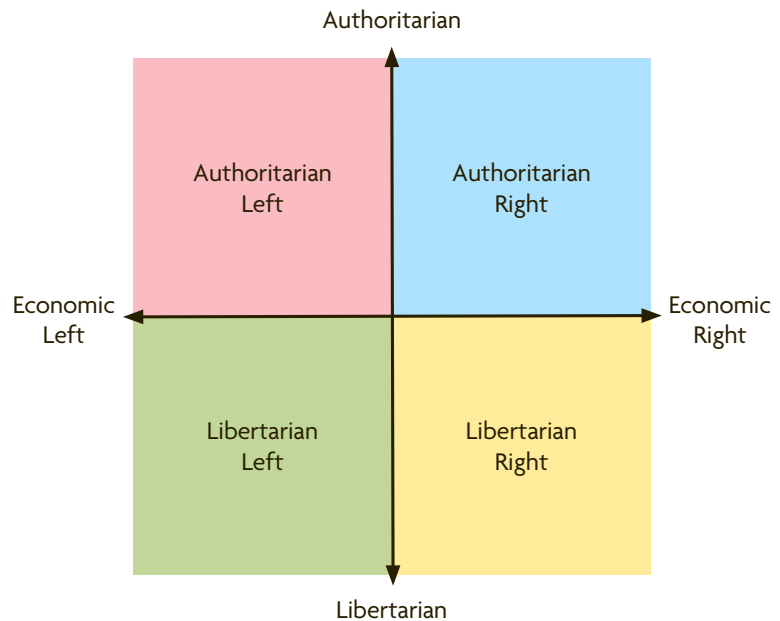
Another ideological conflict that has come to the fore is between the view that the state should be secular vs. the state should be controlled by religious rules or be strongly influenced by religious groups. In a country like Iran, that conflict line is the very motivation behind the current Islamic rule, but also among Christian conservatives around the world there is a desire to allow religion to play a greater role in the politics of values.

A number of other ideologies can be added to these, having partly taken up lines of thought from the traditional ideologies and partly created their own systems of thought based on new conflict lines. Examples of these ideologies are:

- **Nationalism**, which is based on the collective community of the nation out of which it constructs an idealised picture of the nation's past, present, and future. Today, nationalism is often associated with conservative and right-wing politicians, but nationalism has also, for example, been an important part of the struggle for freedom in many formerly colonised countries. Pan-Africanism can be mentioned as a kind of regionalised nationalism that was important in the anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles during much of the 20th century.
- **Feminism**, which analyses society on the basis of the historical and contemporary subordination of women and demands equal rights between men and women.

• **Environmentalism**, which emphasises mankind's place in nature and our dependence on ecological systems and believes that humans should strive to live in as much harmony as possible with nature.

• **Populism**, which exists on both the right and the left, is represented by parties and politicians who pick up on a problem that engages many voters for the moment and promises that there are quick and easy solutions to them. The answers given by populists are black-and-white and they often make a virtue out of not listening to experts or other political parties. They often despise ideologies and argue that they are not needed and base their actions on a real or constructed conflict between the 'elite' and the 'people'. Populists often form parties controlled by a strong leader or a small group at the top of the party.



GAL-TAN is a term used to describe a spectrum of political values. Parties are seen as either GAL (which stands for *Green-Alternative-Libertarian*) or TAN (*Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalistic*). Sometimes it is combined with the left-right spectrum to create a two-dimensional graph.

## When ideologies become destructive

History is full of examples of ideologies being used in ways that have not benefited anyone – not the society as a whole nor the individuals within it. This is where a sharp line is drawn between totalitarian ideologies, such as fascism and communism, and more liberal ideologies, the category in which social democracy is counted.

Totalitarian ideologies are characterised by a desire to subordinate the individual to a higher goal. The ideology – whether it be about nationalism, racism, class struggle or authoritarian traditions – takes precedence over everyday experience. Often, this kind of criticism is also directed at the most extreme forms of economic liberalism, stating that it gives greater precedence to an economic theory of how growth and prosperity are created than to the practical experience of the inequalities that this kind of policy creates.

Liberal ideologies, on the other hand, are characterised by placing people – not a theoretical model – in focus. They are also characterised by greater pragmatism and a desire to adapt their policy platforms to a changing world. For social democracy, this creates a difficult but very important balancing act. On the one hand, one must defend one's ideology and stand up for the value of ideological considerations, especially against populist parties and parties which are entirely dominated by a strong leader and which often claim to despise ideologies. On the other hand, one must be open and receptive to new experiences and perspectives and maintain the focus on people.

### Letting reality have its say

This indicates that for social democracy, it is important that its ideology is not something that is a fixed, always given, system that never changes. All ideologies that aim to be a living part of the political life of a society must respond to changes in the economy, social life, and culture. While the values ought to remain constant, social democracy does not believe that there should be a static view of a predetermined future socialist society. Or, for that matter, any clear or straightforward paths towards this goal. Ideology is a dynamic process in which small or large changes in reality must be allowed to have an impact on political analysis as well as vision. If a party's goals and practices are not adapted to changes in the reality around

it, the party will die out, or it will be forced to become increasingly authoritarian in order to pursue its policies.

## The value of a living party platform

A party platform is a document describing the ideology of the party and in what ways the party wants society to develop. A party platform, which must usually be approved by the party's highest decision-making body, the National Conference, ought to include:

- An outline of the party's fundamental ideas, values, social analysis, and perspectives on its environment.
- A presentation of the party's long-term political objectives, important choices in terms of direction, and fundamental positions.

It is important to emphasise here that a party platform should not be expressed in too general terms. Sometimes you see party platforms that are so general in nature that almost any party would support them. The platform then becomes meaningless as a description of the party's own ideology, positions on important issues, and objectives. The platform ought to provide an open and honest account of the political conflict lines and contrasts with other parties and ideologies and be clear about what distinguishes social democracy in particular.

At the same time, the platform ought not to be too detailed. In the run-up to an election or a political campaign, there is often a strong desire to launch separate issues, and to see these issues as so important that they must also be included in the party platform. But these issues should not be included in the party platform. Instead, the party can add an action program or a single-issue platform for different policy areas, especially in the run-up to general elections. A party platform needs to remain relatively constant over time. Issues can be resolved and then removed from the political agenda. It is also conceivable that a party may change its opinion on an issue when the circumstances around it change. The voter or party member who opens the party platform should be able to understand in a simple and concise way the fundamental positions of the party on important questions of values such as freedom, equality, and solidarity.

*“ History is full of examples of ideologies being used in ways that have not benefited anyone – not the society as a whole nor the individuals within it. ”*



## How do you work in practical terms with ideological development?

A party that wants to be a living and relevant force in the society must work continuously with its own ideological development. One way of doing this is to develop its own party platform. In Swedish social democracy, it is the National Conference that decides whether to revise the party platform.

### *Platform panel and platform groups*

The task of producing a new proposal is then given to the party's platform panel. This is usually led by the party chair (but it is up to the National Conference to decide) and the platform panel has a further five members, plus five substitutes. The secretary has a particularly important role to play in coordinating and producing actual texts.

Just like in elections to the Party Executive, it is the party districts at the party's regional level that nominate candidates for the platform panel. It is the National Election Committee which, after internal considerations, presents a balanced and representative list of candidates to the National Conference, which ultimately decides who should sit on the platform panel. So the platform panel therefore has its mandate directly from the members, not the party leadership. The platform panel members and substitutes have the right to attend the meetings of the Party Executive when proposals from the platform panel are being considered, and they also have the right to take part in discussions and have the right of initiation. The platform panel also has the right to submit proposals directly to the National Conference.

During the process of revising the party platform, the platform panel may appoint sub-groups and committees to look into various aspects of the platform. The platform panel's proposal is then submitted to the local branches and party districts. This ensures that the organisation's members and elected officials at all levels in the party are included in the discussions. Then the platform panel compiles the comments received and writes a final proposal, which is introduced at the next National Conference.

The same method used to develop a new party platform can be used when the party wants to develop its ideas and policies in other areas of political ideology or policy on concrete issues. The National Conference or the Party Executive can initiate a platform on, for example, foreign policy, education policy, cultural policy, or some other area. A group is appointed to draft the platform. It is important that the group appointed to draft the platform is representative of the party as a whole and is appointed in line with formal procedure.

When it comes to policy and ideological development, it is inevitable that informal structures and networks will be part of the process. People talk politics with those they have around them. That can be a good thing and contribute to personal growth. However, it is also important that this kind of process is started and ended in a formal way so that everyone gets a chance to be involved and have an influence.

This is also why a formal decision on the adoption of a new policy platform must be made by the National Conference (if it is a platform specifying general direction in a policy area), or by the Party Executive if it deals more with concrete issues.

Sometimes it might be about the party needing to conduct talks on a broader issue, such as discussing the party's view on general trends in the society, its vision, or the challenges in the medium term or, for that matter, a very concrete issue, without being formulated in a specific platform. A method that can be used in that case is to hold a conference on this particular issue.

In all cases, it is important that the process is inclusive of the entire organisation, that all members have the opportunity to express their opinions and learn more about what the issue entails.

### ***Conferencing through study circles, seminars, and themed meetings***

One method for including the entire organisation is to run study circles on the topic to be discussed. The party produces background material on what the issue concerns and formulates a number of questions that the members can consider and arrive at a position on. Over the course of one or more themed meetings, they can discuss what they think, what the assumptions for the theme are, and how they think the party should proceed. Where study circles are run, it is important that they become part of the party's educational activities and are conducted in an organised manner. The results of these discussions are then sent to the higher level. This is a method that can be used by the party at the national, regional, and local levels to gather members' views on key areas of ideological development and policy on concrete issues.

In today's digital world, where most people are connected in some manner to social media, it is also possible to generate dialogue on ideology and policy on concrete issues online. This can be done through online meetings, or simply by digital dissemination of the results of the discussions within the organisation to the party leadership or the like. When using open and dialogue-oriented procedures, it is important for the party to create a system that can actually make use of the outcomes of the conferences held. If the members feel that they were asked for their views mostly for the sake of appearances, and that the result ended up being something planned by someone higher up anyway, the method could, on the contrary, backfire on the party. If used correctly, this method can be a mobilising force that makes the whole party better at arguing and campaigning for its fundamental values.

### ***Local activities***

For a social democratic party, it's important to maintain the attitude that ideology and values are not solely the purview of experts. An understanding of the ideology of the party exists in every member and all members are equally capable of participating in and contributing to ideological debate. It is therefore important that the conversation about ideology and politics is kept alive at all times and that the party builds a structure that permits new ideas,

perspectives, and proposals to be generated anywhere in the organisation. Ideology and values ought to be part of the party's basic education for new members and there should be forums for political ideology discussions in all parts of the organisation. This is difficult, particularly when the pressures of day-to-day political life constantly intrude. Nevertheless, it is important that ideological debate is kept alive.

One way to do this is to provide simple materials for political ideology workshops, seminars, and open meetings, where members and interested parties can participate, learn more and discuss ideological issues. Experience shows that this does not happen by itself. In a party, it is easy for the members, especially the most active, to be drawn into a tough, day-to-day political grind that consumes a lot of time and energy. Ideological studies and discussions on political ideology then tend to be given a back seat. In this situation, a special organisation may be needed for this type of study and activity – party officials, an organisation or associations and clubs that specifically work with this. A study circle leader in the local organisation needs support to regularly include ideology studies and these kinds of meetings and conversations in the party's activities. Think-tanks and political ideology magazines or online magazines can play a role in starting and stimulating discussions on political ideology in different parts of the organisation.

### **The value of diversity**

In all forms of ideological development and platform work, it is important that the different interests and opinions represented in the party are also present in the conversation. Otherwise, conflicts will get embedded and sooner or later come to the surface. One needs to realise and accept that in a party – even though all of its members fundamentally embrace the same ideology and the same basic values – there can be different perspectives and opinions. A process that does not include all members risks leading to less enthusiasm and engagement within the party, and a situation where fewer people will be able to speak for the party's ideological base and policy platforms.





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### *What is your ideology?*

- What would you describe as your political ideology? Why do you have these fundamental views?
- How would we describe our party's ideology? What are our party's foundational values?
- Are these values/views still relevant today? Why?/Why not?
- How has the political history of our country impacted our party's ideology? Are there differences in our ideological tradition in comparison with classical ideological currents? If yes, in what way?
- Do the members always have to 'think like the party' about everything? Or can you think anything you like as a social democrat? If not, where is the line drawn?

### *What role does ideology play for you?*

- Why do parties need an ideology and an active conversation on political ideology? What is the opposite, and what would be the consequences of that?
- Consider our party's current set of policies. What guides these and what processes determine them? To what extent are they ideological?
- Is a clear ideological profile important to our sympathisers and voters? If so, to what extent does it influence the party's communications and policies?
- Name a reform or a policy from our party that has been significant for you, your family, or friends – one that is distinctly ideological. What makes it ideological?

### *How do you work with ideology and ideological development?*

- What is the status of ideological knowledge/support broadly in our party? Is there a living ideological/political ideology conversation?
- Are our politics and our policies linked to the party's ideology? Why?/Why not?
- How does our party's ideology influence the day-to-day political work in local decisions where we operate? Do we have any clear examples of when it does?
- Describe the practical work being done with ideological development today. What is in place? What is lacking?
- How can we promote knowledge about ideology, debate on political ideology and ideological grounding in our communications with the party's leaders and members, and in the party's policy proposals?





# Constitutional structures and party rules

If the political messages of a social democratic party are to be credible, it is important that its own organisation also reflects the values, ideology, and methods that it wants to permeate the whole of society. So, what kind of party should it be?

## A democratic party for the many

In political science, a distinction is usually made between a few different types of parties. One of these is the *cartel party*, which is not based on membership or internal democracy but is a network that bring together various interest groups seeking to gain political influence. Or the *cadre party*, which is a collective designation for parties controlled from the top. The basic idea in a cadre party is that a small, well-educated, and enlightened elite ought to control the direction of the party. A third type of party is the *personified party*, which revolves around a single person, a strong leader, who brings together different interest groups. Another type of party is characterised by *clientelism*. It is based on a political culture in which relationships are created through the exchange of services between politicians and ‘clients’. In exchange for loyalty and votes, this group of ‘clients’ is compensated with gifts from the treasury that the parties have at their disposal in their capacity as the government in their countries, regions or municipalities.

Before the popularity of democracy, most parties in parliaments were more or less loosely formed cartel parties. At the end of the 19th century, when the labour movement and social democracy emerged, it was partly as a protest against these more elitist parties. Social democracy aimed to be a democratic mass-based party constructed from the bottom up as a popular movement of many members who are actively involved in the party’s activities.



The party was to be a tool for the growing working class which lacked political rights, economic opportunities, and actual influence. Later, from the 1920s onwards, this concept was broadened and the party saw itself more as a bridge between the working class and the middle class. A party that wanted to engage and activate large groups of people beyond just one class or one special interest.

Unlike cadre and cartel parties, mass-based parties have a fixed organisation with a strong structure in the form of a pyramid with hierarchical levels. Their members identified themselves more with the ideology of the party than with its leaders, decisions were based on the participation of each of its members, and their activities were funded by members’ payments rather than sponsors. Its task was to politicise and organise the masses for a political purpose and to encourage people to get involved and stand for political office at all levels of the political system. Their political power was based on a large number of members, which was therefore an important driving force to recruit as many members as possible.

Democratic mass-based parties such as traditional social democratic parties can therefore also be designated federal parties, where power come from the base organisation and local branches and is concentrated in regional level organisations which together make up the party. Over time, many parties have emulated the model that the labour movement created and organised themselves in a party structure with strong local branches, a solid member base and a formal hierarchy from the bottom up – from the local to the national level.

### The value of being a popular movement party

Social democracy’s fundamental position is that freedom is something that we can only make a reality together, and that political empowerment and change are therefore

crucial. However, a party that has many members and is able to activate them and make their voices heard also has many advantages over smaller, more elitist parties. A broad-based popular movement party:

- Has larger networks and interfaces with the community
- Finds it easier to inspire commitment, increase knowledge and find solutions to the social problems affecting people in their everyday lives
- Has more members who can come up with new thoughts and ideas and are therefore less likely to stick rigidly to old patterns of thought and to policies that are no longer relevant
- Has more messengers to spread the word – particularly in election campaigns and other campaigns.

A popular movement party should strive to be a force in national, regional, and local parliamentary assemblies and an actor in the activities of voluntary organisations and civil society.

## The party constitution and its significance

Just like many other organisations, a party has a constitution. It establishes the organisational structure and is a set of rules about the roles of different parts of the organisation, how decisions are to be made, and how democracy is to function in the party, as well as how various processes such as preference voting and political decisions are to be implemented. The constitution specifies, among other things, how far in advance a notice of a meeting should be sent to the National Conference and who has the right to vote, and regulate functions and authorities. The constitution gives the organisation stability and means that everyone is made aware of the rules that apply. The constitution regulates the distribution of power in the party. It gives legitimacy to the organisation's representatives, makes the organisation transparent and provides guiding principles in conflict management. No part of the party organisation may breach the constitution. In short, the constitution is a prerequisite for the party to be able to function, and to be able to operate in a democratic way.

In the following, we will review some basic areas that are included in the Swedish Social Democratic Party's constitution and what their role is for the organisation.

### The party's purpose and task

Right from the start in Section 1, the Swedish Social Democratic Party's constitution establishes that the party is a "popular movement based on democratic principles" and that the nature of the party requires close contact with its members and voters and is grounded in people's

everyday lives. This section also describes the party's task, which in brief is about:

- Bringing in people as members who share the party's views
- Shaping public opinion in support of these views
- Standing for election and running election campaigns
- Coordinating the party's work at different levels in the democratic system
- Cooperating with the trade union movement
- Collaborating at the international level with labour movements in other countries.

### The role of the members

The constitution clarifies the role and importance of members in the organisation – their rights and obligations. For a party that aims to organise many people, membership is central, and it is important that the constitution is clear about what is required for someone to be regarded as a member. In a party with the ambition of being a popular movement, the requirements for being a member should not be too strict. According to the Swedish Social Democratic Party's constitution, to be a member, you must:

- Acknowledge the fundamental ideology of the party, as described in the party platform and the constitution
- Pay a membership fee
- Not behave in a way that is disloyal to the party
- Not campaign in conflict with the party's fundamental ideology
- Not harm the party or its activities.

Provided these basic requirements are met, it is up to the member themselves to decide whether they are to become a member. Membership also entails a number of rights. A person who is a member of the Social Democrats has the right to:

- Participate in the meetings and educational activities of Social Democrat associations and local branches
- Get information about the party's positions on policy and organisational issues
- Present policy proposals at meetings of associations and their local branch
- Submit motions to the local branch annual meetings as well as the meetings of the party districts and the National Conference
- Participate in conferences organised by the party at all levels.

A member who can show that they have paid the membership fee is also entitled to vote at membership meetings, National Conference elections and general votes, and to be elected to official roles within the party and political assemblies for the party.

## New 'types' of membership

In recent years, many parties around the world have created a new kind of membership, a level that lies between being a full member and a supporter or voter. The UK Labour Party, for example, introduced a new category of membership in connection with the 2016 election of the party leader. The new membership category is called registered supporter and it cost only £3 for this kind of membership, which in turn means that you are allowed a vote in electing the party leader. This led to a large number of new registered supporters in the party. However, this model has also been criticised for being such a quick path to membership and the right to vote in important internal elections, increasing the risk that political forces outside the party might try to take over the party. In many parties there is also a requirement that the member must have been registered in the party for a period of time before an annual meeting or National Conference in order to be entitled to vote in internal elections. The constitutions of many parties also establish how long a person must have been a member before becoming a candidate for the party in general elections or standing as a candidate for positions of trust within the party.

It is of course possible to conceive of both these models

of membership, or for that matter other variants. What is crucial is that the constitution is clear. That there is no doubt as to who is a member entitled to vote within the party and who is not. There is also a risk that shortcuts to internal influence will undermine the value of being a full member. A party therefore always needs to ensure that the individual member perceives that membership serves a function. That it is important to be a member and to pay the membership fee.

## Limits of membership

It is also important that the constitution is clear about what the conditions are for being expelled from an organisation, and that expelling someone is not undertaken lightly. What does it mean in practice to “not behave in a way that is disloyal to the party” or “not harm the party”? There is a margin for interpretation here that can be abused. In an open and democratic popular movement party, there must be plenty of tolerance for political debate. Internal criticism is not disloyal or harmful to the party, nor is having a number of candidates for a political role. It should not be too easy to expel someone from a party and when this happens, the process should be transparent and have great legitimacy.

## FACTS

### EXPULSION FROM A PARTY

A democratic party must have transparent rules, and tolerance in exercising these rules, for when it is justified to expel a member. Differences of political opinion should not be grounds for expulsion. Taking the Swedish Social Democrats as an example, there is hardly any member who has exactly the same opinion as the party on every issue. There is debate all the time, and this is good for the growth and development of the party. It helps its members to sharpen their arguments and define their positions better.

Having said that, there are reasons that could lead to expulsion. The clearest example is that you cannot be a member of another party or engaged in another party in, for example, an election campaign. In many parties, the constitution provides the option of expelling a member convicted of a crime (often the expulsion applies for only as long as the person is serving a sentence for the

crime) or if, for example, a member has misappropriated party funds.

From the Swedish Social Democrats' constitution: “A member who behaves in a way that is disloyal to the party, who campaigns in blatant violation of the party's fundamental ideas as expressed in party platforms and the party's constitution, or who otherwise manifestly harms the party and its activities, may be expelled by the Party Executive. Expulsion requires a three quarters majority of the votes cast.”

The local branches or regional organisations may initiate an expulsion case. As a general rule, a decision to expel a member must be made by the Party Executive. If the expulsion concerns a member being a member of another party, having behaved in a way that is disloyal to the party in a trade union dispute, or having acted against the party in general elections, the Executive Committee may

decide to expel the member. Before making a decision, submissions must have been received from the local branch and the party district to which the member belongs. Expulsion cases are prepared by an expulsion panel, which is appointed by the Party Executive at its first meeting after the ordinary National Conference. The expulsion panel consists of a chairperson and a further four members. The initiative for the expulsion of a Social Democratic party member may come from the member's association or club, the local branch, the party district, or the expulsion panel itself. When the Executive Committee or the Party Executive votes to expel a member, the decision must be made by a three quarters majority in order to be valid.

The rules for expulsion may differ from party to party. The important thing is that the rules are clear and predictable and that they are enforced objectively and with legal certainty.

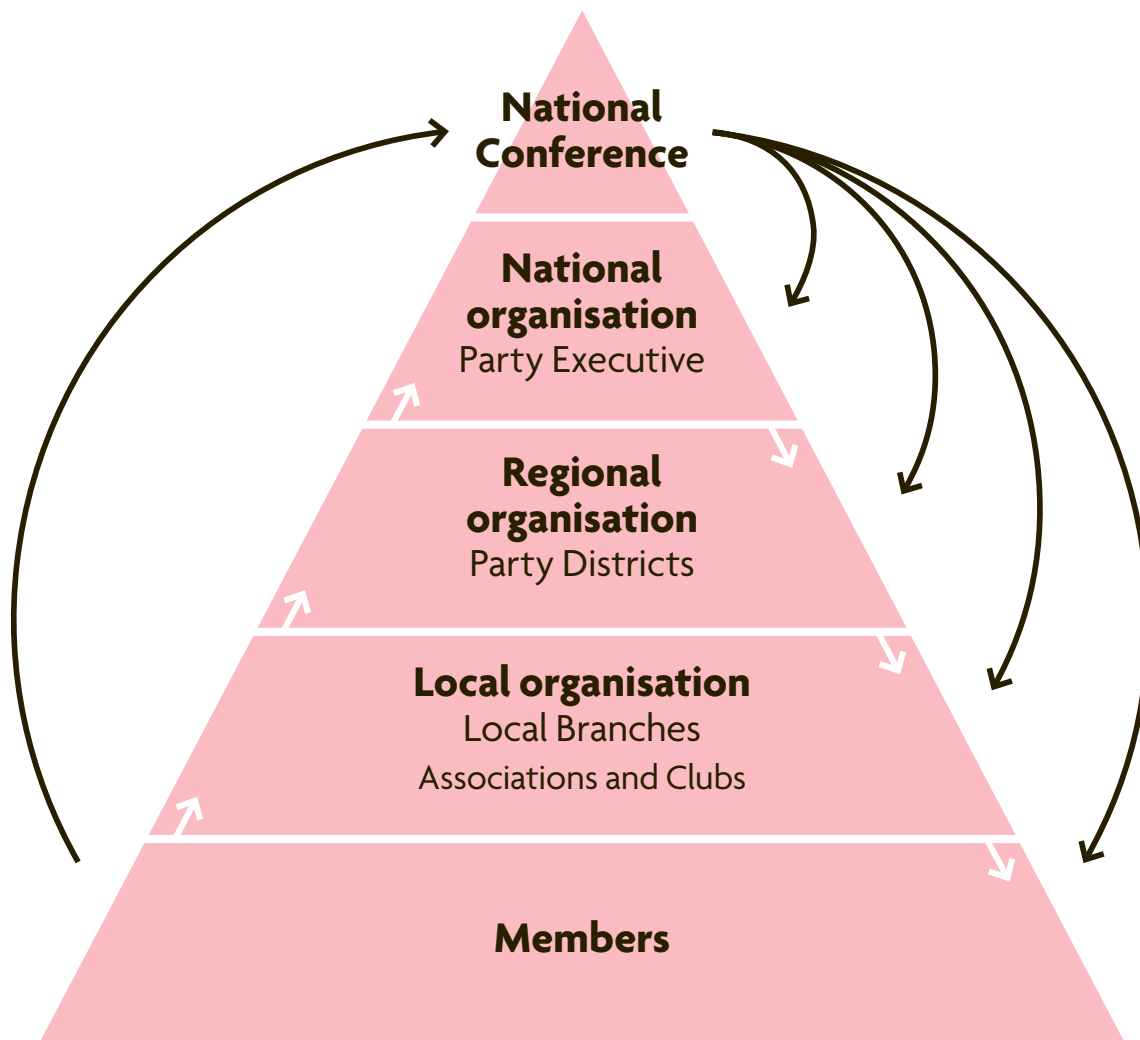
## The organisation – a federation

As we have already seen, social democratic parties usually operate on a federal model, such as a pyramid, with the most important organisational unit – the local one – at the bottom and the national party leadership at the top. The national party leadership gets its political mandate from the regional organisational level, which in turn gets its mandate from the local level. The National Conference is the party's highest decision-making body. Delegates are appointed directly by the members.

Between National Conferences, the Party Executive is the party's highest decision-making body. This does not mean that the Party Executive can make whatever decisions it likes in areas that the National Conference would normally

decide on. The precise limits on this are not laid down in the constitution. The party leadership's view is that this requires remaining keenly sensitive to and listening to the movement. If the Party Executive decides on an issue that the National Conference believes it should have had on its agenda first, the National Conference can reprimand the Party Executive at the next National Conference. The constitution describes the procedure for elections to the Party Executive and Executive Committee and the main features of the party's organisation.

The Swedish Social Democrats' constitution states that Social Democrat associations and clubs are the base of the party, the fundamental organisational unit of the party. These are then part of a local branch (arbetarekommun),



Caption: The picture describes the different levels of the party, from the members and upwards. The arrow to the left shows the direct influence of members on the National Conference. The arrows on the right show that all levels must follow the decisions of the National Conference. The arrows inside the triangle reflect the flow of power from the bottom to the top in a federal organisation. The local level of the organisation is often different in different countries. Sometimes it is geographically based, sometimes it is based on other models such as numbers of members. In Sweden, the local branch (arbetarekommun) is geographically based (corresponding to one of Sweden's 290 local municipalities) and in turn made up of Social Democrat associations and clubs, which form the base level of the party's organisation.

which corresponds geographically to one of Sweden's local government areas (a municipality). The local branch is the party's main organisational unit at the local level, and local branches are in turn part of a party district, which is the regional level of the party's organisation. It is these districts that together form the party at the national level.

The constitution also states which party districts form the organisation, and hence what the base of the party is at the national level. This means that you can't form a new district and expect it to become part of the party without confirmation from the National Conference and incorporation into the constitution.

It is the party districts that organise the election of delegates to the National Conference. The number of delegates that each party district has at the National Conference depends on how many members it has. Many members lead to greater influence at the National Conference, and hence the policy and organisational direction of the party. However, it is important to emphasise that it is the members who elect these delegates. It is the members who vote for the candidates they want to represent them at the National Conference.

The task of the constitution is to regulate the distribution of power in the broader sense at all levels of the party's organisation. The Constitution also sets the organisation's fiscal year and regulates functions and authorities. With the exception of the organisational structure, this essentially means who does what. Who decides what? Who interprets and applies the decisions made? And in particular, the constitution regulates how the party's officials, committees and the like are to be elected. However, a basic structure that is common to all levels of the organisation is a good idea here. These matters will be addressed further in **Module 2: Holding Elections and Reaching Decisions.**



## Basic rules for the regional and local levels

The constitution is to guide all aspects of the party's organisation. Thus, the party constitution also contains basic rules that apply to the local and regional levels of the party. They regulate the distribution of power and how internal democracy is to function at these levels. They establish when the National Conference and annual meetings are to be held, how delegates are to be appointed to them and, on a general level, what powers the executives at these levels have. There are basic rules for this for party districts, local branches and associations and clubs.

It is also possible for these levels in the party to adopt their own local rules, which then supplement the rules in the party constitution. Such supplementary rules must not conflict with the rules in the party constitution and must always be approved by the organisational level above. The supplementary rules of an association or club must be approved by the Local Branch Executive. The supplementary rules for local branches must in turn be approved by their District Executive. And the supplementary rules for party districts must be approved by the Party Executive.

## Rules for the party's participation in elected assemblies

As a rule, it is necessary to regulate the relationship between the party's parliamentary groups and the party. The party constitution establishes what is required to be a member of the social democrats group in Sweden's national parliament (the Riksdag). Its rules also stipulate that this group is accountable to the Social Democratic Party National Conference. The constitution also establishes that "The parliamentary group must strive to present a united front, in line with the party platform and decisions made by the National Conference in matters that are the subject to parliamentary proceedings."

In the same way, there are separate rules for the regional and local Social Democratic local government/municipal groups and parliamentary groups which describe the purposes of these groups, the relationship between the party's elected representatives and the party in these assemblies, as well as the process of decision-making and the like. The local government/municipal group is responsible to the party locally and the Social Democrats representing the party in regional parliaments are responsible to the party at the regional level. These matters will be further addressed in **Module 6: Representing and Governing.**

# How do you work with the constitution?

The constitution is decided by the National Conference, the party's highest decision-making body. In most parties and organisations, some form of qualified majority is required to amend the constitution.

A common model is that either a two-thirds majority is required at a National Conference or a simple majority at two consecutive National Conferences. It should simply be a bit more difficult to change the basic democratic structure of a party than when it comes to other matters.

At the same time, it must be possible to also change the constitution, and in principle there have been minor or major changes to the constitution at all Social Democratic National Conferences since the founding of the party. The conditions for running a party are constantly changing and it is important that the constitution is a living document that is adapted to the times that we live in now. For example, people's changing ways of engaging with the party and new ways of looking at membership may require changes to the constitution. Or digitisation, where the possibility to vote and make one's voice heard via the Internet changes how people engage and want to be active and have an influence.

## Constitution committees

In Sweden, the National Conference can appoint a Constitution Committee to develop proposals for amendments to be considered at the next National Conference. The Party Executive can also initiate changes to the constitution. The proposals are then submitted for consultation so that the entire organisation can be involved in the process. Of course, members and the party's local and regional levels



can also initiate changes and submit proposals to the National Conference.

As with party platforms, it is the party district that proposes who should sit on a Constitution Committee and it is the National Conference that ultimately makes the decision to adopt or reject proposals. The Committee is usually headed by a party official, such as the party secretary or party treasurer. Here too, it is important for the Constitution Committee to reflect the entire party organisation, since it is the entire organisation that will then use the constitution in its activities, and for this to work, the proposals that are produced should be well-supported.

## Interpretation of the rules in the constitution

The constitution concerns the entire organisation and it is used and consulted daily at all levels of the organisation – before planning meetings, making decisions, and when activities are to be carried out. It is a guide and tool for party functionaries and those elected to positions of trust, but also for active members. In matters big and small. In short, the best rules are:

- Predictable, easy-to-understand and clear – to avoid arbitrary application
- Consistent, structured, and well-supported within the organisation – with a coherent structure
- Easy to interpret and apply – Who does what? Who decides what? Who interprets/applies the rules?

In the vast majority of cases, there is clarity about what is at issue, and decisions and activities are implemented correctly. But sometimes debate, uncertainties and even conflicts will arise. Decisions that have been made in contravention of the constitution for the party district, the local branch or the social democratic association or club, may then be appealed by a party member to the Party Executive. The appeal must be in writing and received by the Party Executive no later than one week after the date of the contested decision. If after an inquiry the Party Executive finds reason to do so, it may set aside the contested decision.

## Flexibility and confidence

It is important to emphasise that the constitution should be a guide, but not a map that can solve all the issues that may arise in the daily work of a political party. There are plenty of instances when there may be misunderstandings or different views on how to deal with an issue within the framework of the constitution. The best kind of constitution will have a balance between clarity and interpretation, and rules and practice. If there is no such balance, the constitution would end up being a very large and unwieldy document, and it would become difficult to do anything at all.

Consequently, trust is crucial for a party that aims to be a broad popular movement. Those who are active within it can't be overly suspicious of one another. People need to feel that they can depend on other people. This reduces stress, for the individual and also within an organisation, and it means that any new problems that may arise are easier to solve and more manageable. Trust is based on dialogue, openness to other views and an honest ambition to resolve conflicts without one side leaving with a feeling of having been deceived and crushed. Fundamentally, this is about the culture and spirit of the party. A party that can build this kind of trust into its organisation will have a huge advantage over its competitors.

Rules cannot and should not be too detailed, especially at lower levels of the organisation. There should always be a basic structure that creates stability in the organisation

and allows all members the opportunity to have a real influence, but there must also be a broad understanding of the different conditions that exist in different parts of the country for the party's activities. The overwhelming majority of those who are active in the party are active in their free time and put in a great amount of effort entirely without compensation. The constitution should support and help them to meet their commitments as smoothly as possible – not be an obstacle or a nuisance. The constitution should therefore always be an instrument that helps those responsible for the particular level of the organisation to do the right thing, and very rarely an instrument for a higher level to tell a lower level that it has done the wrong thing. This means that the constitution itself should provide ample scope for local variation within a wide but firm framework.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### *What kind of party are we?*

- What does the party's constitution say about our own organisation? How should it be structured?
- Who are the members and what role do they play? At what levels are they involved in decision-making?
- What do the constitution say about the party's internal democracy? Are there sufficiently clear rules for how decisions are to be made and how elections are to be held?

### *What role does the constitution and work with the constitution play for us?*

- Why do we need a constitution and why do we need to work actively with the constitution? What would be the opposite, and what consequences would that have?
- What guides the current organisation and activities of our party? To what extent is this based on clear rules?
- How often is the constitution used in the day-to-day activities of the party where we are active?
- What are our triggers for the expulsion of party members? What does it mean to be disloyal to the party – and how does this assessment relate to openness to internal debate and our internal democracy?

### *How do we work with the constitution so that it remains a living document?*

- Do we have clear and well-developed rules in our party? If not, why not?
- How knowledgeable are members and party leaders about the constitution?
- Are there areas where our internal culture runs counter to the constitution? In what ways?
- How are we doing in practice with the constitution – rule interpretation and rule development – in our party? Who decides, and who ensures that the rules are followed?
- How does the constitution affect day-to-day activities in our local branch? Can we think of examples?
- How can we promote knowledge about the constitution and its practical application among party leaders and members?



# The party organisation and organisational structures

The way a party is organised says a lot about the party's values and outlook on people. It gives a picture of how democracy functions internally and tells us how the party can perform its basic tasks.

One challenge facing all parties is the question of how it should balance its two most important functions. The first is to include the 'ordinary' member in a meaningful way. The goal is that the party's activities should reflect the will of its members, that political decisions should be discussed by many and that the priorities of the members of the party should be captured. An organisation which reflects that the members are the foundation of the party, and that each member is of equal value.

The second is that the party organisation functions efficiently and maintains its impetus.

These functions do not need to contradict or counteract each other. It is possible to ensure member influence and remain efficient but this requires a well-functioning party organisation marked by confidence and trust in each other, and where everyone, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, or other background, feels that they are represented.

As we have seen in the section on the constitution, the organisation of the Social Democrats in Sweden is based on a federal model. The party at national level consists of a number of party districts (the regional level), which are the main organisations and "owners" of the national



party. In other words, it is not the national level that is the basis for the underlying organisational structure, as would have been the case if control of the party were more centralised. In turn, the party districts are 'owned' by the local branches. In other words, it is the levels at the base of the organisation that give the party its mandate, establish its policies, and elect its leaders. It is also in this local party organisation that individuals can become members and get involved in influencing the party's politics and activities.

Experience also shows that it is easiest to build a party,

or in fact any other organisation, from the bottom up, rather than the other way around. When structuring an organisation, if you based it on local activities and then form regional levels, and then national ones, the organisation can grow organically. The alternative – forming a party at higher levels and then trying to create the party locally is, of course, also possible, but requires different methods and resources. Regardless of which approach is used, it is important to establish that the National Conference should always be the most important meeting place for a national party.



## THE STRUCTURE OF THE PARTY ORGANISATION VARIES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

The actual party organisation at different levels in the society varies from country to country. There are a number of reasons for this. The party organisation must be adapted to the society as a whole. The way people organise themselves follows different patterns, and the party organisation must take account of this in its structure. One of the key functions of a party is to choose who will represent the party in democratically elected parliaments at different levels in the society, for example at the local, regional, and national levels. How different countries and their democratically elected parliaments are organised varies and therefore the organisational structure of their political parties also varies. In some cases there may be more levels; and in others, there may be fewer. This

course module presents the models for the structure of the Swedish Social Democratic Party's organisation. So you will find that there may be differences in the structure of the party organisation in your country. If you do not recognise your party's model in this module, then you should try to match the levels described here to your party's structure and describe why your party is organised in this way. The important thing here is to understand how the party organisation is fundamentally linked to and functions in tandem with the society in which it lives, and internally with the organisational levels in the party.

There may also be differences in the local branch organisation. The local branch is the party's base and every party member must belong to a local branch. In the

Swedish Social Democratic Party, this level is called the Arbetarekommun, and corresponds to one of Sweden's 290 local government areas (municipalities). One local branch of the party per LGA/municipality. No new local branch is created unless a new LGA/municipality is created. In many other countries, a set number of members constitute a local branch. Usually the party sets an upper limit for the size of a local branch and forms a new local branch. Usually the party sets an upper limit for the size of a local branch and forms a new local branch.

In Sweden, there may also be constituent social democratic party associations/clubs that together form the local branch.





## National Conference

The National Conference is the party's highest decision-making body and the basis for democratic influence on the organisation's management and activities.

The National Conference decides on the party's constitution and party platforms and considers the policy and organisational motions received from the members and the party organisation. It also chooses the national leadership of the party (party chair, party secretary, Party Executive and Executive Committee).

### 350 delegates

The Swedish Social Democratic Party holds a National Conference every two years. It is the Party Executive that convenes the National Conference and this must be done eight months before the National Conference kicks off. The Party Executive may also decide to hold an extraordinary National Conference if it considers that the whole party needs to meet to debate any specific issue, for example to choose a new party leader or adopt a position on some crucial political issue. An extraordinary National Conference can only deal with issues included in the notice to attend the National Conference, which the Party Executive decides.

The National Conference consists of 350 delegates elected by the party's main organisations – the party districts. Each party district receives a proportion of the total number of delegates corresponding to their membership eight months prior to the National Conference.

### FACTS

#### HOW ARE DELEGATES ELECTED?

The election of delegates to the National Conference begins with the Party Executive deciding on the constituencies no later than six months before the National Conference.

After that, the election of delegates begins at the earliest five months and at the latest three months before the National Conference. All members are permitted to stand as a candidate and it is the local branch that handles the election process itself. The elections can be conducted by letter or electronic voting. The local branch decides this on its own. The voting rules are determined by the District Executive.

A person who votes should be able to prove that they have paid their membership fee to the party at least two weeks before voting starts. The District Executive is responsible for counting the votes and the person who receives the most votes is elected as its delegate. Substitutes are also elected for those who are elected as party district delegates – they are the candidates who have received the most votes after those who were elected to be the delegates.

The delegates elected to an ordinary National Conference then remain delegates right up until the next ordinary National Conference. In other words, if an extraordinary National Conference is called, the same delegate serves at this conference as at the previous ordinary National Conference.



## Party Executive and Executive Committee

The Party Executive is the highest decision-making body of the party when the National Conference is not in session. The Party Executive is led by the party chair and handles the management of the party's activities in accordance with the party's platform and constitution and the decisions made by the National Conference.

The Party Executive can adopt political platforms that are in line with the decisions made by the National Conference, and each year it adopts a budget and a business plan for the coming year.

The number of members of a Party Executive varies. This matter must be adapted to the size of the organisation, geographical conditions, and the like. In Sweden, the Party Executive consists of the seven members of the Executive Committee and a further 26 members. In addition, there are a number of substitutes for the full members, both for the members of the Executive Committee (seven substitutes) and for the Party Executive (15 substitutes).

The National Conference elects all members and substitutes of a new Party Executive and Executive Committee, and also the party chair and party secretary. However, the National Conference has delegated the election of the party treasurer to the Party Executive.

Because the organisations have a common values base and history, it is traditional that the chair of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), the largest union confederation

in Sweden, has a seat on the Executive Committee. The party's affiliated organisations also have the right to attend and right of initiation at meetings of the Party Executive, and of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee meets more often than the Party Executive and is the function within the party that is responsible for the operational management of the party. The Executive Committee is headed by the party chair and is responsible for ensuring that the decisions made by the National Conference and the Party Executive are implemented.

To sum up, the Party Executive and the Executive Committee, and the Secretariat that supports them, constitute the party's national level. This level is responsible for holding the party together. It is also the national level which coordinates other parts of the organisation and provides leadership and support to the regional and local levels. In short, the national level's tasks are to:

- Be the face of the party in national politics
- Coordinate policies and messages so that the party group in the parliament and the national party are not viewed as two different things
- Develop national strategies, write policy action programs
- Create communications and campaign platforms to support other parts of the organisation, and coordinate communications and campaigns
- Develop tools and methods for political work that can be used by all
- Produce national educational programs, and hold conferences and other events.

Close coordination with the regional party organisations is important. If a feeling of distance arises between the local, regional, and national levels, this will create internal conflicts and problems for the party in the long run. The regional level and its administration are important for the central coordination of the party, and to assist in this, the party secretary and the Executive Secretariat have regular briefing and coordination meetings with the highest level employees/officers in the party districts. These briefings take place once a month and are led by the organisational head of the secretariat. The party secretary often participates in these meetings, as this informal gathering of regional level representatives

constitutes one of the most important channels for the role of party secretary. This means that you can quickly make handshake (informal) agreements at the national level for the party's governance as a whole. The purpose of these meetings can range from membership recruitment and education to policy campaigns and planning for election campaigns. In addition to these meetings, the chairs of the party districts also meet often. The party chair usually attends and chairs these meetings. Your party organisation will be more efficient when regional party officials and representatives from all over the country regularly meet with each other and with the national level of the party.

## FACTS

### THE ROLE OF THE PARTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

Most social democratic parties have a national party secretariat with employed staff to assist the Party Executive in the management of the party's activities. Many parties choose to make a distinction between the political and administrative functions in the party. The administrative staff are responsible for implementation and organisation, but may not seek political posts at the same level within the party where they are employees. This is to ensure objectivity in the implementation of political decisions. The Party Executive Secretariat's task is to assist the Party Executive – not to be a political player itself.

The most common solution is that the role of the party chair is to manage the external activities of the party, while the party's internal organisation is managed by the party secretary. It is a matter of division of labour. A party that wants to be visible externally and have a functioning political decision-making apparatus at national level ought to have a chair who can focus on this. The organisational responsibility can then be borne by another function.

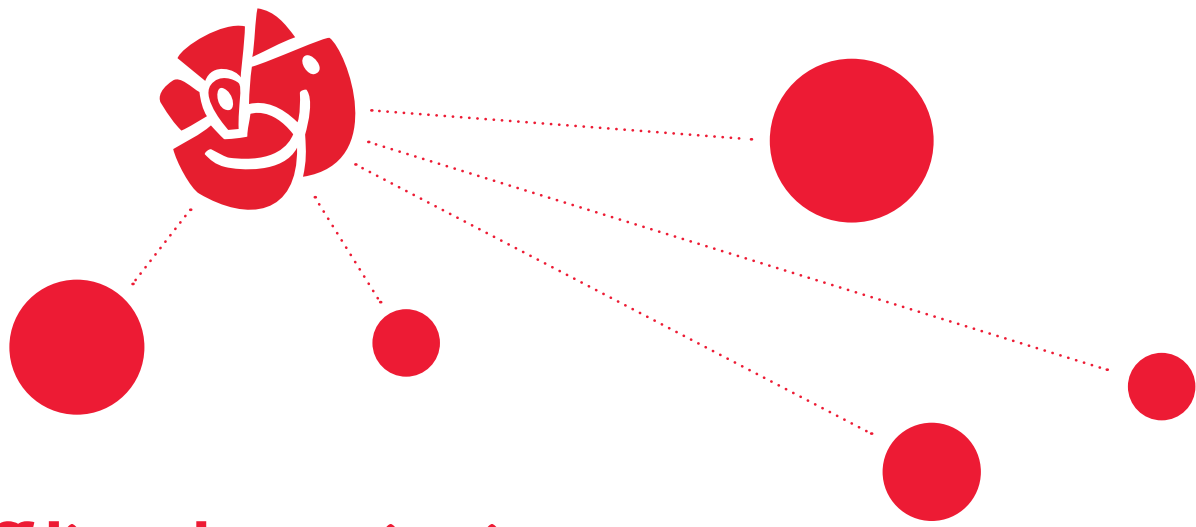
#### The tasks of a party secretariat can be divided into five parts:

- **The first** is about providing assistance to the politicians in the party before decisions are made, to assist the party's decision-making bodies in conducting investigations, writing documents, and formulating concrete proposals. Before a National Conference, it is often the party secretariat that drafts the documents and, together with the elected representatives in the Party Executive, responds to the motions and proposals received from party members.
- **The second** concerns being involved in interpreting and enforcing the decisions of the National Conference and the Party Executive. The Secretariat helps to plan and implement activities and formulates policies in accordance with the decisions made.
- **The third** function is to organise, coordinate and work actively with the party's outreach activities, to work with press contacts, communications, and campaigns. One important function is to coordinate and plan the party's electoral campaigns.
- **The fourth** function – and this is one of the most important – is to work on

strengthening the party's organisation. This may include planning and implementing courses to strengthen the party's activists, working with organisational development, managing the parties finances, and coordinating the various parts of the party. This includes contacts with the local and regional levels, but also with affiliated organisations and organisations in the party's wider network, such as the trade union movement.

- **The fifth** function is to coordinate the party's international contacts, often through an international secretary. This entails a risk that international work will end up exclusively with those who coordinate it centrally. It is important to remember that all parts of the organisation benefit from sharing experiences with party comrades from other parts of the world.

The Social Democrats in Sweden also have staff/officers employed in the Social Democratic Party districts. Generally this means a few people in each party district who have the same functions in relation to their political leaders as the central party Secretariat has in relation to the Party Executive and the Executive Committee.



## Affiliated organisations

The Social Democratic Party National Conference also decides which national social democratic confederations are to have the status of affiliated organisations.

In Sweden, these affiliated organisations have a special relationship with the party, and it is not always the case that social democratic parties choose to organise themselves in this way. In Sweden, these organisations at their local level are part of the party's local level. A club in, for example, SSU (the Swedish Social Democratic Youth League) or S-kvinnor (the Federation of Social Democratic Women) is a member of the local branch and has the same status as other local Social Democratic Party associations and clubs. As central organisations, they have a place in the Party Executive and the Executive Committee, and similarly a place in the local and regional executives.

At the same time, these organisations have an independent status. They adopt their own policy platforms, have their own local associations/clubs, their own districts, their own membership recruitment, and educational activities. There are no formal ways in which the Social Democratic Party can influence their political or organisational choices. During election campaigns, they often run their own campaigns in support of social democratic politics and even launch their own candidates for the Social Democratic lists in elections. However, they always cooperate closely with the party in election campaigns.

In many parties in the world, these organisations are often called the Youth League of the Social Democratic Party, the Women's League of the Social Democratic Party, etc. In Sweden, they are social democratic organisations, but they are still independent organisations vis-à-vis the party. These affiliated organisations also have their own constitutions that are adopted and developed independently of the Social Democratic Party's constitution. But it goes without saying that an organisation that wants to be part of the social democratic movement cannot deviate in any significant way from the platforms and constitution of the central party.



### THE PARTY AS PART OF A WIDER MOVEMENT

Social democracy's affiliated organisations are part of the wider network of organisations that make up the entire labour movement. This movement also, and most obviously, includes the trade union organisations. Trade union organisations were involved in the formation of the Social Democratic Party and still have a close relationship with the Party. By tradition, the chair of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), the biggest trade union confederation in Sweden, is a member of the Executive Committee of the Social Democratic Party. Cooperation with trade unions is at national, regional, and local levels. Ultimately, it is the members of the Party and the trade unions who decide the nature of their cooperation through decisions at their National Conferences. Their cooperation can range from joint policy platforms to supporting election campaigns.

There is a tension here between fundamentally different ways of organising a party – a hierarchy or a network. But there are also major benefits for a party that is capable of being both of these things. From an organisational and leadership perspective in the party, it is important to have a clear hierarchical structure. The organisational levels that exist must be transparent along with the relationships between them, elections and voting processes, and which members have the right to influence these elections. But for a party's capability to be a force in the whole of the society, it is also important to build and maintain strong networks. For the same reason, social democracy has often established ties with the new popular movements that have emerged in recent decades. When the environmental and peace movements grew strong in the 1970s and 1980s, ties were established with them. The same was done when feminism and the campaign for LGBTQ rights emerged in the 1990s. In these cases, the ties have been even looser than with the trade unions, but still an important channel through which the party can have feelers out in the community. ■

# The party districts – the regional level

The party districts are the regional level of the organisation of the party. In very simplified terms, you could say that the districts exist to win elections at the regional level and as a body for cooperation between the local branches in the district. The party districts form the national organisation of the party, and in the same way it is the local branches which together form and constitute the party districts.

The political and organisational priorities of a district are decided at an annual District Conference, to which the local branches send delegates. The number of delegates a local branch can send to this conference is dependent on the number of members it has. Once a year, all party districts in the Swedish Social Democratic Party must also hold a District Council. The local branches appoint delegates to this Council. The District Councils do not elect leaders or any other functions in the district. This is done at the District Conference. Instead the District Councils are often focused on specific policy or organisational issues and are a way of keeping the policy dialogue and communication alive between the different levels of the party.

The party districts are geographical units whose borders usually coincide with Sweden's administrative regional borders. In other words, a Swedish party district covers the same geographical area as a Swedish region (popularly elected bodies that are politically responsible for health and medical care, local transport, infrastructure, and regional development among other things). These regions are also made up of the constituencies for elections to the Swedish parliament. When voters go to the ballot box to vote in parliamentary elections, they vote for a regional list of names for the party they prefer. An important function of the party districts is therefore to coordinate the party's work in the regional parliaments/elected bodies. It is

also the districts that decide at their District Conferences on which politicians they will stand for elections to the regional and national parliaments.

The party district is the coordinating organisation for all the local branches located within the party district's geographical area. A local branch cannot be formed or closed down without the approval of the District Executive.

In brief, the task of the regional level and the party district can be summarised as follows:

- Advocacy for the party's ideology and politics within their sphere of activity
- Responsibility for the electoral organisation in the region
- Development and coordination of policies in the regional parliament
- Nomination of representatives at the regional level
- Communication support for the members of the national parliament who come from the region
- Contacts with local branches and the Party Executive
- Cooperation with affiliated organisation and other organisations in the party's network
- Development and coordination of educational activities
- Support for member care and organisational and business development in the local branches.



# The local level – the foundation

The local branch is the most important level in a party. The local branch is responsible for recruiting and activating members in the party's activities. The stronger the local level is, the stronger the party will be as a whole.

If the party has won the elections and has the political power, the local level is an important channel through which the party can inform about and explain the party's policies and get the necessary feedback from members and voters on how these policies are perceived in the community.

In many parties in the world there is a type of local party branch, often linked to a geographical area, a municipality or local community, or even a workplace or the like. In many cases too, there is a simple rule which says that if the local branch has a certain number of members, a new local branch should automatically be formed. In the Swedish Social Democratic Party, there is no such simple rule about how the local, foundational level of the organisation is structured. Generally, there are two levels: the party base, which consists of social democratic associations and clubs; and the main local level of the party organisation – the local branch.

## Social democratic associations and clubs – the party base

When a person becomes a member of the party, they become a member of an association or club, which is the most basic organisational unit of the party. Associations and

clubs are often found in workplaces, residential areas, or the like. Most Swedish local government areas/municipalities have had a network of social democratic associations and clubs for some time – some no bigger than a couple of city blocks while others include members from an entire city district. There are also trade union clubs, where the members of a trade union have come together and formed a Social Democratic association that has recruited and activated members among the members of the trade union. In addition, there are often one or more Social Democratic youth clubs, a club for Social Democratic women and maybe a club for the organisation Religious Social Democrats of Sweden, being principally Social Democrats with a religious faith. Members of the Social Democratic Party may also have come together in associations around a particular political theme, or associations that are engaged in specific local issues.

In the same way as the local branches are the base for the party district, these associations and clubs form the base of the local branch. They are the focus of political work, study circles, and campaign activities in the local area. The association's or club's sphere of activity is established in the local branch's organisation chart, and the association or club cannot be closed without the approval of the local branch.

But the most important thing is not to get bogged down in a rigid structure. If a certain number of members want to form an association or club, they are in principle entitled to do so. It is then often better to affirm this kind of engagement than to try to squeeze it into a given structure and risk stifling it.

In many smaller local government areas/municipalities in Sweden, there are no longer any Social Democratic associations or clubs left. Members are then made a member of the local branch directly, and it is the local branch that forms the base level of the organisation of the party in that municipality.

## The local branch – the main local level of the organisation

The Swedish Social Democratic Party local branches take up the same geographical area as a Swedish local government area/municipality. Somewhat simplified one could say that its task is to win local government/municipal elections and to be the organisation through which Social Democratic associations and clubs cooperate.



It is the local branch that draws up lists of politicians to stand for the local government/municipal elections and decides what policies the local branch should pursue in this particular geographical area. Because the organisation is federal in nature, it is up to each local branch to determine its own political priorities on issues. Furthermore, all levels in the organisation have a joint responsibility to comply with the jointly made decisions of the National Conference and the Party Executive, as well as the District Conference and District Executive so that the party's policies and messages to voters are coherent and not too out of step with each other.

The local branch holds an annual meeting, which is the highest decision-making body of the local branch. Often, meetings of members of the local branch are also held regularly during the course of the year, often once a month or once every two months. Generally speaking, all members of the local branch have the right to attend and vote at meetings, but in larger local branches with many constituent associations and clubs, individual associations

and clubs may appoint delegates to these meetings based on their membership numbers.

In short, the task of the local branch can be summarised as follows:

- Advocacy in the local government area/municipality for the party's ideology and politics
- Communication with voters within the local government area/municipality
- Election organisation for its sphere of activity
- Development of policy within the local government area/municipality
- Election of political elected representatives
- Training of elected representatives
- Development of local educational activities
- Membership recruitment and member introductions
- Support for the activities of its constituent social democratic associations and clubs.



# Forming a local branch

In the following, we will go through how to form a local branch with the first basic steps required for it to function within the constitutional framework of a party. In order to simplify the description, we have based it on describing a general local branch, and not a local branch that has two levels of organisation as in the Swedish Social Democratic Party.

## Taking the first step

A local branch is started at an inaugural constituent meeting by a number of party members in the area who joined together to form the local branch. Different parties have different rules for when this may occur. It may be that there is no existing local branch of the party in the area, or that the number of members in another local branch has reached an internally set limit and a new local branch needs to be formed. In older parties and where the local branches are firmly tied to specific national administrative units, there are rarely opportunities to form a new local branch.

A number of formal decisions must be taken at a constituent meeting. You have to elect an executive, appoint people to a number of other functions, decide who will audit the local branch's activities and finances at the end of the financial year, and so on. The best way to ensure that all the necessary decisions are made is to have an agenda that includes these items.

According to the Swedish Social Democratic Party's constitution, all local branches must hold annual meetings at the latest by the end of February. If a local branch is formed at a different time during the year, the first constituent meeting must elect a temporary executive, which can manage the start-up of the activity and kick off the local branch in anticipation of the next ordinary annual meeting.

## Accession to the party and the task of the executive

Do not forget to sign the minutes when the meeting is finished. The minutes of the meeting (the record of the meeting) is only valid if it is signed by the chair and/or the secretary of the meeting and the two persons elected to check the minutes. The minutes are then sent to the regional organisation and its executive for a decision to approve the formation/accession of the new local branch of the party.

At the following annual meeting, the Executive is then elected. A local branch needs to have at least one meeting per year for all members, namely the annual meeting. However, the Executive naturally needs to schedule more meetings than this, so decisions can be made on impor-

## FACTS

### AGENDA FOR THE FORMATION OF LOCAL BRANCH

1. Meeting opening
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Determination of the voting list
4. Election of the meeting officers
  - Chair of the meeting
  - Secretary of the meeting
  - Two members to check the minutes of the meeting
  - Two tellers (counters of the votes)
5. The decision to form a new local branch
6. Decision on the name of the new local branch
7. Decision on the membership fee
8. Decision concerning the number of members in the temporary executive
9. Election of the temporary chair  
*(until the ordinary annual meeting in January–February)*
10. Election of temporary treasurer
11. Election of members of the temporary executive
  - 5 members
  - 5 substitutes
12. Election of signatories
13. Appointment of authorized public accountant as auditor
14. Election of the Nominating Committee
  - Members of which one is the convener
15. Business
16. Any other business
17. Meeting closure

tant issues and so that the members feel that they can be involved in influencing developments in the local branch, and so that the Executive has the opportunity to communicate about how the local branch's activities are progressing.

The Executive manages activities in accordance with the party's constitution and the decisions of the National Conference, District Conference, and local branch. The task of the Executive is to agitate for the party and its policies, to draft local policy platforms, and to be responsible for finances and membership administration in the local branch. When the local branch meeting is not in session, the Executive is the highest decision-making body.

The constitution usually establishes the minimum number of members of a local branch executive. The chair and treasurer are elected separately by the members of

the Executive. Other common roles are vice-chair and secretary. Additional roles such as local course organiser and trade union manager may also be appointed and included in the Executive.

Within the Executive, an Executive Committee may be appointed or, if the annual meeting decides this, the Executive Committee may be elected separately. The Executive is elected for a period of two years, and the number of members of the Executive is to be an uneven number. One year the smaller number of members is elected, and the next year the remaining members are elected on a rolling basis. This makes it easier to maintain continuity in activities and the work of the Executive.

We will return to the work of the Executive and roles in **Module 2 – Holding Elections and Reaching Decisions.**



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### *What kind of party are we?*

- What are the organisational frames for us as a party? How is our party structured? Is it made up of various parts that control it from the bottom up, or is it more or less one organisation that is controlled more from the top down?
- What role do members have? How is this apparent in the organisation of the party?
- What is the structure of our party nationally, regionally, and locally?

### *What is the role of the party organisation?*

- Why do parties need a clear organisational structure? What is the opposite, and what would be the consequences of that?
- What is the division of responsibilities and labour between the different levels in our party? Is this different from the Swedish example? In what way?
- Think about our party's current organisation and activities. Is it well developed at the local level? What is the situation where we live?
- Is it important to be locally organised? Why?

### *How does our party organisation function?*

- Is there a clear and detailed organisational structure defined in the constitution?
- How knowledgeable are our members and party leaders about the party's organisation?
- Do we work actively to develop the party's organisation, and to build the party's presence locally? Who is responsible, and how do we do that in practice?
- How can we promote knowledge of the party's organisation among our leaders and members?

**Photo:**

page 1: Anders Löwdin

page 4: Mikael Landelius

page 5: Ida Borg

page 6: Martin Hörner Kloo

page 8, 9: Mikael Landelius

page 10: Simon Johansson

page 14: Ida Borg

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page 27: Socialdemokraterna

page 30: Simon Johansson

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## An introductory course in how to run and represent a party

Democratic parties in different parts of the world can learn a lot from each other's experiences and practices. This introductory course and its modules focus on how a party can strengthen its organisational and political capacity to become a strong and democratic party with active members and inclusive structures and activities. The strength of a party depends to a large extent on how democratic it is and how well the organisation functions. This requires organisational structures and ways of working that function well, and a culture of openness to people actively sharing in and participating in the political work of the party.

This first module looks at the fundamentals of a party constitution and deals with the basic structures and organisation of a political party. The need for ideology, constitutional frameworks, and rules as well as the importance of the party having a clear organisational structure. A political party that is careless with these fundamental building blocks will find it difficult to function and to be effective and democratic.

You can read more about the introductory course and find all its modules here:

[www.palmecenter.se/palmeacademy](http://www.palmecenter.se/palmeacademy)

