



2023-12-13

To the accompanying partners of
posted staff

Christmas and New Year greeting from the Family officer

Dear accompanying partners,

I hope that you who are new to the role as a spouse/partner of a Swedish diplomat posted abroad have settled well, and that those of you who have previous experience of this also feel like you're in a good place, both in life and geographically. Below is a short summary of what has happened during this past year regarding issues that could be of interest to you.

Just like previous years, there has been a constant flow of questions submitted by booth accompanying partners and officials. Among others it has been about compensation for language training, requests for support during the posting to children with special needs and the possibility for foreign accompanying partners to receive Swedish diplomatic passports.

We often receive questions related to remote work. This possibility has become more and more feasible, and there are several examples of accompanying partners whose employers have allowed them to work remotely while abroad – the Government Offices is one such employer. We expect that the Swedish Agency for Government Employers will soon announce its positive view of working remotely. However, these solutions are not always without complications, and individual assessments are made with respect to taxation and health insurance. The employer must also assess each situation based on the needs of the organisation.

Many questions have been about social insurance affiliation, primarily in the EU, the EEA and Switzerland. In this regard, we have benefited from the contact person for the Ministry for Foreign Affairs at the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, Malin Bekkebråten, who has been very helpful. Our contact network at the Swedish Social Insurance Agency has expanded to include representatives of the Directorate-General for Legal Affairs, and we have an ongoing dialogue with relevant ministries in the Government Offices regarding S1 certificates that are used in the EU/EES, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Staff members and accompanying partners who now are required to apply for compensation from the

Swedish Social Insurance Agency must deal with unreasonably long processing times. A solution has been reached where the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency provides compensation for major expenses pending processing by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, however a more manageable solution would be preferable.

All questions submitted to the Human Resources Department are being taken care of in one way or another. However, some questions have to be forwarded within the Government Offices or to an external government agency.

The inquiry 'One system for all – a review of the regulatory framework for sickness benefit qualifying income' which began in late 2021 has now concluded, and the report is being circulated for comment until 22 December. We hope that the proposal that accompanying partners receive the sickness benefit they lost during their time abroad upon return to Sweden will have a positive impact in the Riksdag.

Another inquiry - 'Better conditions for posted government employees' - also affects accompanying partners and includes the question of residence permits and citizenship for non-Swedish accompanying partners. It will be presented in June 2024.

As to bilateral agreements enabling accompanying partners to work in the place of posting, progress is still slow. One agreement was signed this year, and another will be in place once it has been translated and signed. A few more agreements are at various stages of the process.

This year, many embassies have had meetings for accompanying spouses and partners and ideas and thoughts have been shared with the Human Resources Department in Stockholm, which is much appreciated. All your thoughts and views are very welcome.

Along with the rest of the HR Department, I would now like to wish you all a truly lovely Christmas and hope that those of you who are working have some relaxing time off and those who aren't working will continue to enjoy the freedom and opportunities that life as an accompanying partner offers.

Åsa Karén Persson

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