Press Release
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High taxes in Sweden: yes please, but give me my money’s worth

Anywhere in the world is a good place to live if you’re rich, but Sweden is a good place even if you don’t have a penny to your name. Virtually free healthcare, and all kinds of social benefits are available to all citizens. So where is the magic that makes all of this possible? The answer is taxes, taxes, and more taxes. Strangely, the Swedes don’t seem to mind all that much, not even on tax declaration day.

Tax revenue in Sweden, as a percentage of GDP, is consistently one of the highest in the world. Income tax in Sweden, when combined with the social fees paid by the employer, is on average about 44.4%, but can be much more for high income earners. The average non-Swede would probably cringe at the thought.

“People trust the State, the politicians, the administration, to use their tax money in an effective way,” says Henrik Berggren, Swedish author and historian, and former political editor of the daily newspaper “Dagens Nyheter”. “I think that’s the basic reason for acceptance. The second is that there is a high evaluation of equality in Sweden. The political goal has been to create as equal conditions as possible for people.”

The Swedish Tax Agency is considered one of the most trust worthy brands in the country and Swedes, in general, quite happily pay their taxes. It seems that the great social welfare system of the nation is based on a culture of collectivist ideas that has been fostered over generations, with concepts like “folkhemmet”; “the peoples home”.

For the upcoming Swedish elections, tax issues do play a role in the debate, but perhaps not in the way one would expect.

“It would stun all American political experts to hear that an incumbent government would propose tax increases before a national election, in order to gain votes! This is not the American way,” comments Fulbright Professor of American Studies at Uppsala University, Steven Schier. “(In the United States) you would urge lower taxes, in various ways.”

And even on Tax Declaration Day itself, the people’s view seems clear: “I’ll pay, as long as I get value for my money”.

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Taxes in Sweden 2013. A summary of the Tax Statistical Yearbook of Sweden
This publication, Taxes in Sweden 20112 is an English summary of the Swedish edition of Skatter i Sverige 2012. It presents an overview of the Swedish tax system as well as up-to-date statistics on relevant aspects of taxation. All tables in the Swedish edition have English translations, and references to them are enclosed in square brackets in this English summary
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