

## **The Swedish Bar Association – A presentation**

The Swedish Bar Association was founded as the result of an individual initiative in 1887 and gained official status when the new Code of Judicial Procedure entered into force in 1948. The association today in 2015 has approx. 5,700 members, which is a dramatic increase on the 1980 figure of 2,000. In addition to the members, more than 1,900 associate lawyers are employed in the Swedish law-firms.

The association is governed by the provisions of the Code of Judicial Procedure and by its own Charter, affirmed by the government. Only members of the association may use the title *advokat*. The association is an association under private law, whose purpose is to maintain high ethical and professional standards in the legal profession, monitor legal developments and endeavour to ensure that they benefit from the association's experience, to safeguard the general professional interests of its members and to further unity and consensus between members.

The association frequently acts as a referral body in consultative processes and gives its opinion on virtually all new draft central legislation. The association also performs certain public functions. It has been delegated administrative tasks under the Code of Judicial Procedure and thus acts as a public authority, particularly in disciplinary matters.

The association is divided into seven geographical departments, each operating locally and having a Department Board. The Department Boards submit statements of opinion to the board of the association in connection with membership applications and other matters. Members exercise control over the association via the Council, which is appointed by the Departments. The Council meets once a year and elects the Board of the association, which comprises twenty members, including a chairman and vice-chairman.

The Council, via the auditors, examines the Board's account of its administration and decides whether the Board is to be discharged from liability. It is also the Council's task to set fees. Members acting as elected representatives on any association bodies do so without payment.

The Council also elects the chairman, vice-chairman and six members of the Disciplinary Committee. The remaining three members of the Disciplinary Committee (*i.e.*, the public represent-

atives) are appointed by the government. The Disciplinary Committee is entirely independent in the performance of its duties.

A general two-day meeting of members is held every year. The gathering is called “The Lawyers’ Days” (*Advokatdagarna*). Here, members attend lectures and debates on current legal policy and professional topics.

The regulations governing the association are intended to assure the quality of the assistance and advice given to those seeking legal help. Under the Code of Judicial Procedure, members are under a duty to observe professional ethics and, as practitioners, they are subject to the regulatory and supervisory authority of the Bar Association and the Chancellor of Justice. Applications to join the association undergo rigorous scrutiny. The association has disciplinary authority over members in relation to the ethical standards of their conduct.

The association has its office in Djurgården in central Stockholm. Day-to-day operations are managed by the Secretary General of the association, who is also its administrative director. The office operates as a service centre for members, the Board, the Disciplinary Committee and arbitral tribunals. It is also home to the law library of *Stiftelsen Juridiska Biblioteket* (the Law Library Foundation), which is open to members and other lawyers.