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## **A Vision:**

### **Observations at the Government Offices, April 2025**

The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Industry are in preparation of an important initiative in the industrial sector before the yearly budget proposition. The initiative concerns strategic investments and a radical shift in the industrial infrastructure. How will Sweden's industrial sector and its global network look in the future? They take inspiration from the latest entrepreneurial successes that have made the surrounding world look at Sweden with great expectations. There is a new amazing creativity and innovative power in the country, which has brought unemployment figures down to a record low. The progress comes as a direct result of a major initiative in the cultural sector, highlighting artistic expressions and methods as an important area of knowledge. The task now is to use this as a foundation also for a sustainable development in the industrial sector. The Minister of Culture has therefore been invited for consultations at an early stage in the process.

Together they lay down a strategy to discuss the initiative at a seminar made up of business people, philosophers, sociologists and artists. This is to ensure that the initiative will really promote the development of a good society, the ultimate political goal. The plans will be discussed in the context of a target that the government has set for cultural and economic progress, with respect for pluralism, multiculturalism and global cooperation.

Before the seminar the Government holds talks to set out the issues that will be discussed. All ministers activate their international networks to get an early input from the outside world on the topics in question. Each ministry then spends a day on internal discussions about its various spheres in relation to the cultural goals. This is done in the form of workshops with a mixture of civil servants and politicians. Each study group invites a number of school children to take part. In this way the issues find a form as well as arguments needed to explain the initiative. These experiences are presented at the seminar.

The seminar one month later is a success! The issues are provocative with a clear aim at the future. Some of Europe's leading minds and innovative artists are invited. Politicians, civil servants, scientists and artists contribute different perspectives on the strategic development and offer creative solutions to the problems they help define. When the budget proposition is presented the strategy is well developed and the argumentation for the investments so clear that the ensuing political debate with the opposition truly concerns the future of our society.

In the Ministry of Culture there is also intense work before the budget proposition. One major issue is how the role of art can be enhanced within a broader cultural context. The work of the artist and artistic research increase the knowledge production in society that is seen as crucial for new models of society to develop. Another condition is the added emphasis on art and practical philosophy in the school curriculum.

The basic school reform that was instituted a decade ago is now beginning to show results. The new focus on how to learn rather than what to learn has given teachers and students a chance to develop new methods for different levels of learning without age class divisions. Creativity and critical reflexion are now at the centre when the tools are history and language/communication. Aesthetic courses are now known as art including both theory and practice. This is how the concept of language has been dramatically widened, opening up for different cultural backgrounds to engage in discussions about society. Children's improved ability to express themselves has strengthened the democratic foundation of the school. Children take part in the decision-making organs at school. They learn to speak up for each other and to take responsibility both as individually and as a group for their decisions. The school reform also helped integrate top students with the broad student body. Students with special talents have the opportunity to choose individual courses to develop their skills.

What was earlier known as the "gymnasium" (upper-secondary school) is now an integrated part of the basic school system, which adds new opportunities for special talent as well as the broader group. Taking into account the fact that students have different development curves, the new school form offers students a chance to learn at the level which they find most stimulating. During puberty a great deal of the schoolwork is focused on identity and communication through participation in artistic processes and presentations, visits to venues

where society offers cultural experiences. Studies of maths and physics are made on practice based projects. Considerable emphasis is put on the use of modern communications technology to give the students a chance to visit exhibitions, presentations and take part in activities and workshops on a worldwide basis. This includes building personal networks using social media. Focusing on identity formation, communication and language, children gain a command of English at an early age, with Chinese as an alternative.

All universities have learnt to include courses in artistic subjects into traditional science disciplines, following up on the foundation laid in the basic school system. In a short period of time there has been a notable result in the form of increased creativity, innovation and rethinking old ways. All training is related to research and artistic research has an increased role, not just for the development of art, but also of cultural awareness and responsibility. All political parties see this as a fundamental condition for sustainable development. When the Ministry of Education prepares its wish list for the coming budget, this is in focus as they propose increased resources for the top artistic schools. The close integration of top quality and a broad reach is crucial to the future.

The Ministry of Culture these days works as an "umbrella" for all political areas. The Minister of Culture has a very strong position in the government, but also in the global network of leading politicians that supports issues pertaining to a sustainable cultural development, which is central to democracy and peace in our world. Since not only Sweden, but also a number of countries implement this philosophy, positive effects are reported in health, environment and other growth factors.

The policy toward art has become very forceful. The government has declared its view that artists are equal to scientists in relation to their importance for the development of society. This is a quote from the Government's Yearly Declaration:

"The formation of artistic knowledge is of crucial importance for the development of a good society. Through art we can change habits, stop conventions and indifference to take hold. Art can build new rites connected to the values that we must defend to make that which is good and loving become visible. Art can be seen as immaterial pleasure or materialized madness, a crazy alphabet coupled with lust and enhanced intimacy.

Art can make us rethink and critically assess what we hitherto thought was common knowledge. A dissection of reality into its smallest particles and then restructured into a new whole dipped in love. A meeting with art can be a homecoming or a visit to a remarkable, challenging place where anything might happen. A place where we want to stay, amongst all the unfathomable, with eyes open, listening and storytelling as strong, altruistic and creative citizens.”