

The Riksbank's communication policy

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The Executive Board of the Riksbank has adopted an integrated document that describes the Bank's communication policy. It is the result of a review carried out during the spring. The document describes the communication policy for all Riksbank activities and covers both internal and external communication. The monetary policy communication policy is dealt with in more detail in a separate appendix.

The Riksbank's communication policy states that our communication must be open, understandable, objective and up to date. All information must be accessible if it is not subject to secrecy regulations. Simple and clear language, adapted to the target group, is important to get our message across. It goes without saying that the information should be relevant and factual and should be published as soon as we consider possible. Being open and clear about when, where and how we provide information, gives all groups in society equal opportunities to obtain information about the work and decisions of the Riksbank.

We have made quite a few changes in our monetary policy communication in recent years so as to be even more open and clear. We now publish our own interest rate forecasts six times a year and hold press conferences after every monetary policy meeting. In addition, we name the members of the Executive Board in the minutes from the monetary policy meetings. This is all for the purpose of making it easier for outsiders to understand and follow our analyses and decisions.

But we have also received quite a few comments and criticism of the changes. People who follow us closely have got used to one way of monitoring and interpreting information from the Riksbank. When our way of communicating changes, uncertainty may arise. When reviewing the Bank's communication policy it was natural for us to listen to and take on board some of the comments and proposals put forward. The discussions have mainly concerned communication between the monetary policy meetings. Important target groups have felt that information from the Riksbank has not been sufficient and that the level of participation in the economic and political debate by the members of the Executive Board has been far too low and that the decisions made have therefore come as a surprise.

At the same time it is important to recall that it is hardly possible to prevent occasional surprises as regards monetary policy decisions. It is not always obvious which decision will be made. Six different people are involved, who may have different views of the current economic situation and the interest rate necessary to achieve the objective. At the same time it is of course desirable that we are as predictable as possible in our monetary policy considerations and decisions. This was one of the reasons for all the changes we have made.

Clearer communication between meetings

Our monetary policy decisions are followed by concentrated information activities. But it is important to communicate between meetings as well. The members of the Executive Board hold over 100 speeches a year, almost half of which are published as speeches or press releases. In these the members of the Executive Board can describe both central monetary policy issues and their personal deliberations in connection

with the interest rate decisions taken. The members are also able to comment on new statistics, relate them to previous forecasts and describe the factors and trends that are important to take into account when making future interest rate decisions.

Common to communication between the monetary policy meetings is that the information in speeches, press releases or interviews must not anticipate the member's or Executive Board's position in coming monetary policy decisions. In plain language, this means that no member of the Executive Board will reveal in advance how we intend to vote at a coming interest rate meeting, nor how we may perhaps vote.

We can, however, be more generous in highlighting new statistics and clarifying the considerations we are facing. We will continue to be restrictive with information close to a monetary policy meeting so as not to disrupt the monetary policy process.

Ever since the inflation target was introduced we have endeavoured to be as open and clear as possible. In the studies aimed at measuring the degree of openness, the Riksbank is also often ranked highly¹. But what different addressees of a message perceive as clear is more difficult to measure. It is not sufficient to just pull up the blinds and say that we are the world's most open central bank. We must adapt all information and communication, so that different target groups understand our message and so that the message is given at the right time. This is an important task for me and other employees of the Riksbank.

¹ See for example the evaluation of the ECB by Geraats, Giavazzi and Wyplosz (2008) and JP Morgan's (2007) study, which constructs an index of communication.