# Communicable Disease Control for the Future

Interim report: Strengthened pandemic preparedness
(SOU 2025:48)
Final report: Communicable Disease Control for the Future
(SOU 2026:25)




Jan Albert, inquiry chair (särskild utredare),
Inquiry on Strengthened Future Communicable Disease Control

# Terms of reference (direktiv) from the government

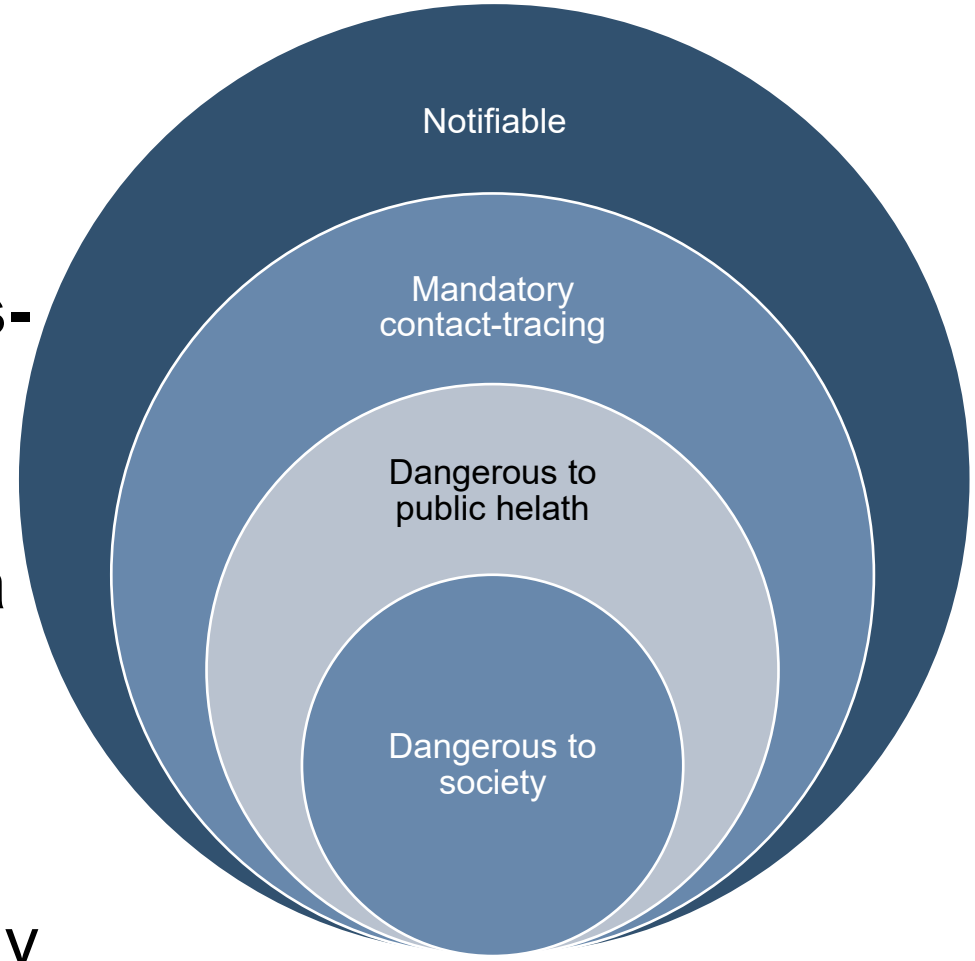
- The Communicable Diseases Act (smittskyddslagen), under normal conditions:
  - Individuals' obligations including the duty to inform for HIV
  - Classification of communicable  diseases including their updating
  - Pseudonym codes (rikskod) for STIs
- Preparedness for pandemics and other widespread transmission:
  - Measures before a disease is classified
  - National coordination of infection prevention and control (vårdhygien)
  - Organisation of the communicable disease control physicians (smittskyddsläkare)
- We were not been tasked with drafting an entirely new law or changing how individual diseases are classified.

# The role of a government inquiry (statlig utredning)

- A part of the Governments' system of commissions of inquires
- A political idea/proposal lays the foundation
- The terms of reference for the inquiry = the directive
- Preparatory material for the commissioning body, i.e. the Government

# Classification of communicable diseases under the Communicable Diseases Act

- **Notifiable (anmälningspliktiga)**: e.g. malaria, dengue
- **Mandatory contact-tracing (smittspårnings-pliktiga)**: e.g. measles, rubella
- **Dangerous to public health (allmänfarliga)**: e.g. HIV, hepatitis A–E, chlamydia, salmonella Free of charge. Rules of conduct must be issued.
- **Dangerous to society (samhällsfarliga)**: SARS, smallpox, Marburg, Ebola (and formerly COVID-19)



# Current regulation in brief

- A duty to protect and inform follows directly from the Act (Chapter 2) and can be issued as rules of conduct decided by a physician (Chapter 4).
- A physician must decide on rules of conduct for a disease classified as dangerous to public health (like HIV)
- This dual regulation creates ambiguity and parallel systems, which we have tried to address with our proposals

# The duty to inform for HIV (informationsplikt)

- In focus in the directive – a result of the Riksdag's announcement to the Government in 2020
- Debated ever since it was introduced 40 years ago
- The Communicable Diseases Act, including the duty to inform, is strongly shaped by the fear of HIV and AIDS during the early years of the pandemic
- Medical and epidemiological developments – 97.5% of known cases are on antiretroviral therapy and are not infectious during sex
- Transmission from people with a known diagnosis is very rare
- The duty to inform does not reflect the current epidemiological situation

# The duty to inform for HIV, cont.

- A duty to inform does not exist in comparable countries.
- Application problems – The duty to inform is sometimes kept too long for patients on suppressive HIV therapy.
- Some ambiguity in the current evidence base from the Public Health Agency of Sweden.
- Reasons of principle – A duty to inform is a far-reaching intrusion into private life, which places extra high demands on its benefit.

**Inquiry assessment:** The duty to inform is not appropriate for sex and should be removed, but openness should be promoted through advice and support

# Proposal – individuals' rights and responsibilities

- Voluntariness should carry more weight. Focus on individuals adapting their behaviour through advice and support
- Rules of conduct should only be given if advice and support cannot be provided in agreement with the individual
- Legal certainty in decisions on rules of conduct should be strengthened
- Rules of conduct should be clear, individual decisions that can be appealed. Time limits, regular review, etc.

# Proposal on individuals, cont.

- The statutory duty to inform is removed
- A duty to inform can only be issued as a rule of conduct where there is a significant risk, and only when adapting one's behaviour is not deemed possible or sufficient
- In practice, never a duty to inform in relation to sex

# Proposal: A more flexible classification

- Not just diseases dangerous to public health should have the possibility to be free of charge
- The Public Health Agency of Sweden is tasked with reviewing the classification of communicable diseases – the preparedness perspective and the possibility of being free of charge become new variables
- The Public Health Agency of Sweden shall thereafter report annually to the Government on whether changes in classification are needed
- Diseases currently classified as dangerous to public health may be reclassified following the review of the Public Health Agency
- Overall, a more flexible and more appropriate system

# Other assessments and proposals

- Reporting with pseudonym code (rikskod) should be repealed once SmiNet has been reviewed
- The Public Health Agency should be able to decide on extraordinary communicable disease control measures before the Government has “fast-tracked” the classification of a disease
- The Public Health Agency shall nationally coordinate infection prevention and control (vårdhygien)
- A statutory requirement on the placement of the communicable disease control physician (smittskyddsläkare) within the region.
- Most proposals to enter into force on 1 July 2027

# A new direction for communicable disease control

- An increased focus on voluntariness and on people's willingness and ability to prevent disease transmission through advice and support
- An increased shared responsibility for limiting disease transmission
- A more appropriate system for classifying diseases
- **Overall, an improved, flexible and modern system of communicable disease control**

# What next

- The inquiry report submitted to the minister on 2 April
- Sent out for consultation (remiss) in May
- Deadline for consultation comments (remissvar) in August
- Currently processed at the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs
- Hopefully taken forward as a proposition to the Riksdag this or next year
- Revised Communicable Diseases Act and other proposals maybe in place in 2027

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