



The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities wishes to express its grave concern over the recently manifested threats against the quality of operations at some of Sweden's most outstanding museums. These are institutions whose plentiful collections from all over the world invest them with responsibilities extending far beyond this country's borders.

It is widely known that the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities is a world-leading institution in its field, with exceptional collections and with an international reputation matched by few other Swedish institutions, not least in Asia. The same applies to the Museum of Ethnography, home to – among other things – the unique Sven Hedin Collection, and the Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities. Among the possessions of the latter are an abundance of objects from excavations in Cyprus, objects saved for posterity from the short-term interests of various forms of nationalism.

What has now happened is that these institutions are about to lose, or have already virtually lost, their scholarly-scientific competence, an alarming development abetted by the Swedish Government. Staff-members with comprehensive scholarly expertise are being replaced by persons who lack these qualifications. Stripped of such expertise, the museums find their ability to maintain their central function undermined: the task of caring for their collections and keeping them available in the long term, regardless of temporary political currents. This is the major problem, irrespective of the size or location of the premises on which the museums are conducting their activities.

We now appeal to the Swedish Government to change its present policies and revert to supporting the principle according to which expert knowledge should be at the heart of the running of Sweden's famous museums. We are also addressing our sister academies, asking them to support us in our endeavour to ensure that this serious situation for science and scholarship is brought to an end. If the policies practised by the Swedish Government are allowed to continue, the result will be an irreparable loss of scholarly-scientific thought as well as a radical threat to Sweden's ability to discharge the country's responsibilities as the custodian of an international cultural heritage.

Professor Birgitta Svensson, Secretary-General