Summary

Based on the available statistics, Transport Analysis observes that the Swedish Register of Ships is continuing to wane in competitiveness compared with other countries' registers. In 2017, the Swedish-registered commercial fleet continued to shrink, numbering 304 vessels of at least 100 gross tonnes each. The biggest decline in terms of both number of vessels and tonnage occurred in the 500–1499 gross tonnage class, in which the tonnage decreased by 25%. Tonnage decreased 7% among the largest vessels, i.e., those over 40,000 gross tonnes. On the other hand, the trend in early 2018 points to increased interest among actors in flagging their ships to the Swedish Register.

Among neighbouring countries' registers, the UK Ship Register has seen the highest level of entries since 2000. In the Nordic Region, Denmark's register has continued to see more vessels flagged to that country, while, like Sweden, Norway and Finland have seen declines.

Even as the Swedish-registered fleet shrinks, the Swedish-*controlled* fleet continues to grow. The total tonnage has increased from just over 12 million gross tonnes in 2010 to just over 15 million in 2017, corresponding to average annual growth of 3.2%. The utilisation of the tonnage at Sweden's disposal increased by 15% in 2017, mainly due to decreased vessel leasing.

The cargo volume handled by Sweden's ports has increased since 2013, although the port areas differ greatly and exhibit major fluctuations in terms of cargo trends.

The core of the report consists of a review of the competitive conditions affecting Swedish maritime transport. These pertain to tax regulations, crewing regulations, Swedish marine transport aid, administrative costs, financing support, and research and development. The Swedish Transport Agency has made certain changes and increased the flexibility available to shipping lines, but at the same time the fees are considered high and the administrative processes complicated compared with those of other countries. The tonnage tax system currently comprises four approved applications, but the system is being funded even as marine transport aid is being reduced.

One key issue in terms of the Swedish competence supply is the development of maritime education and training and the issuance of maritime licences. The number of newly graduated sea captains has developed acceptably, with some 150 new captains being graduated per year in recent years. On the other hand, Transport Analysis notes that the number of new master's licenses has decreased dramatically in recent years: according to information from the Swedish Transport Agency, only 24 master's licences were issued in 2015, and only two in 2016.

Transport Analysis data indicate that the Swedish maritime industry has decreased its non-internalised marginal costs and increased its level of internalisation. Maritime transport is the most environmentally and climate-efficient mode of transport, but its high degree of internalisation is attributable to increased fairway dues for maritime transport, making it less competitive than other types of transport.

Small improvements have been made in the competitiveness of the Swedish Register of Ships, but none has yet had any substantial impact. Because the registers and regulatory frameworks of other countries are simultaneously becoming more attractive and competitive, Sweden will have to move faster than other countries to catch up and to reach its maritime strategy goal of having the best maritime regulatory framework in Europe.