



A summary of Government Communication 2001/02:172

Sweden's National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2002

Produced by the Ministry of the Environment

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Printed by: Danagårds Grafiska

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Article no. M 2002.09
Stockholm, Sweden, June 2002

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Why a Swedish strategy?

Sustainable development is the overall objective of the Government's policy. This report is a summary of the Communication A National Strategy for Sustainable Development (Comm. 2001/02:172), which describes the Government's work in relation to sustainable development.

The summary deals with selected components of the strategy. The order of the sections differs from that in the Communication. A complete account of the strategy will be found in the Communication, which can be downloaded from the Environment Ministry website, www.miljo.regeringen, under the icon Sustainable development, or ordered from the Government Offices Printing Office (telephone +46 8 786 58 10). The Communication is available in Swedish only.

This is the first time the Government has presented a strategy for sustainable development that brings together the social, cultural, economic and environmental priorities in the shift to more sustainable development in Sweden. It is based on objectives, measures and strategies that have already been adopted and are reflected in the policy that is pursued. It applies to the situation in March 2002. The strategy may be regarded as a starting-point and basis for discussions about the work to be done before the first revision of the strategy in 2003.

The national strategy serves two purposes. One is to meet the commitment made by all UN Member States to have drafted national strategies for sustainable development in preparation for the World Summit in Johannesburg in South Africa in the autumn of 2002. The other is to describe the current situation and a vision of the future as regards sustainable development in Sweden. The work of formulating a national, long-term sustainable development strategy draws on the Government's measures with respect to ecologically sustainable development, the experience of national and international efforts towards sustainable development and of international cooperation within the UN, the EU and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Sustainable development strategies have also been formulated, inter alia, by the EU, the OECD, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the countries around the Baltic Sea and the Arctic Council.

At the World Summit in Johannesburg Sweden will also present a national report on its experience of implementation in Sweden of the action programme for sustainable development – Agenda 21 – that was adopted by the UN in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This national report describes the activities carried on at different levels by various players in Sweden.

Sweden's national strategy for sustainable development

Introduction

In a sustainable society we will make prudent use of, conserve and invest in our most important resources – people and our natural environment. Consequently, the society of the future will not overstep the limits of what the natural and cultural environment and human health can tolerate. Guidelines and a strategy for sustainable development will show how lasting changes can be made in society in order to secure welfare and a good standard of living for future generations.

Sweden's national sustainable development strategy is based on a broad approach and brings together social, economic and environmental priorities. The strategy defines the long-term vision and foundation of values and specifies the policy instruments, tools and processes that are necessary to implement the change process. It also contains concrete objectives and measures for the achievement of sustainable development in various core areas. The shift will call for broad participation by various players and will build on public consultation.

Implementation of the strategy will involve important changes, which will be undertaken in a long-term and continuous process. The national strategy will therefore be a living document that will need continuous monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, the strategy document also outlines the future national process after the World Summit in Johannesburg.

Sustainable development

The national effort to change over to a sustainable society is based on the central definition of sustainable development given by the World Commission on Environment and Development in its report *Our Common Future* (1987):

Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable – to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The concept of sustainable development does imply limits – not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities.

Sustainable development is not a clearly defined objective; the important thing is the process of change.



Points of departure for formulation of the strategy

The points of departure for the task of formulating a strategy were that a national strategy should:

- include all three dimensions of sustainability (ecological, social and economic),
- cover all the relevant areas of Swedish policy and should be based on existing government policy,
- interact and be coordinated with relevant international strategies,
- highlight the linkages between various policy areas, and identify synergies,
- raise the awareness of society as a whole,
- initiate a broad debate, and
- be a living document that is regularly evaluated and revised.

Vision and core areas

Sweden's national strategy for sustainable development describes a vision of the future, as well as a number of strategic core areas that are important in efforts towards sustainable development. The vision, rationale and ultimate goal set out in the strategy should remain valid for a generation. The strategic core areas discussed below may need to be reassessed at more frequent intervals; some issues are especially important today, while others may be important in the years to come. The core areas emphasize the importance of integration between social, economic and environmental development. The strategy also includes Sweden's international and local activities.

Vision of a sustainable society – rationale and ultimate goal

Sweden should pioneer the shift to a sustainable society. This challenge requires new thinking as well as continuity. Sweden must look ahead and develop new know-how, but it must also draw on its historical experience. In a sustainable society we will make prudent use of, conserve and invest in our most important resources – people and the environment.

Sustainability – historical experience

Sweden is one of the countries that developed various sustainability philosophies as early as the end of the 19th century. The structural adjustment in Sweden from an agrarian to an industrialized society, and from an industrialized society to an information society, alongside the development of democracy and the building of a welfare state, are important historical experiences to draw on in future efforts towards sustainable development. The striving for social and economic development gave way in the second half of the 20th century to a striving to achieve ecologically sustainable development.

Balancing immediate needs and interests against the prospects of future generations is an established approach in Sweden. This approach, together with Sweden's historical experience, laid a solid foundation for the work of integrating social, cultural, economic and ecological aspects.

Democracy, learning and collective public goods – the basis of the Swedish strategy

The Swedish sustainable development strategy is based on a democratic system of government and the

values this implies. Democracy makes it possible to make rules and build institutions that promote resource-efficient consumption and production patterns and defend the public goods – knowledge, health and the environment – on which a sustainable and progressive development of society is based.

The challenge in the 21st century is to strengthen democratic cooperation on sustainability, not only at the national and local levels, but also at the international level. The international community must assume responsibility for promoting scientific progress, the environment and human health.



The EU and the global dimension

In the conclusions of the Göteborg European Council in 2001 the Member States were urged to formulate national sustainable development strategies of their own. The Swedish sustainable development strategy is a complement to the EU strategy and also a contribution to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in the autumn of 2002.

Cooperation in both the EU and the UN system is very important. Nevertheless, it is essential for Sweden to maintain a high national profile in its

efforts towards sustainable development, particularly when it comes to integrating ecological, economic and social sustainability. Sweden, with its long tradition of thinking in terms of sustainability, is well-placed to move the discussion forwards.

Cooperation on sustainability: business and civil society

Sustainable development is basically a question of values and attitude to life. Continuous dialogue and policies that encourage input from business and civil society are therefore necessary. A society in which everyone feels they have a part to play and the will and ability to assume responsibility is an essential condition for any sustainability strategy.

Sweden's national sustainable development strategy includes many areas in which all those concerned have joint responsibility. This applies, for example, to the creation of sustainable industry and working conditions, sustainable regional development, sustainable agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and a good built environment. Each sector needs special expertise and well-designed strategies of its own. This is a great challenge for the future.

Three aspects of sustainability: protection, management and improved efficiency

Three aspects of sustainability are usually discussed in connection with the environment:

- protection of natural resources,
- sustainable management of resources,
- efficient use of resources.

When applied in a broader sustainability context, including social and economic sustainability, this breakdown into three components gives a good general picture of the national strategy and its scope.

The need to protect the basic resources on which our civilization depends is the most urgent imperative of environmental policy. There is general agreement that climate change, resource exploitation and pollution of air and water are matters of life and death for the survival of the human race and for our planet. Unfortunately, we seldom discuss protection of fundamental cultural and social resources. Our attitudes in this respect must change. There is no doubt that our knowledge and cultural heritage is a priceless resource for future generations. This resource must be kept alive and nurtured in order to keep its value.

The other aspects of sustainability – sustainable management and efficient use of resources – apply equally to ecological, economic and social aspects. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries are important interfaces between natural resources and enterprise. They are an acid test of the requirement for sustainable and efficient use of resources. The sustainability strategy is also put to the test in the context of energy and transport policy.

One of the great challenges of the future in social and economic terms is to create the conditions for a more sustainable family life and working life. The Swedish population is ageing, but at the same time young adults are finding it more difficult to combine work and a family. The birth rate has fallen sharply in Sweden during the 1990s. Sick leave is on the increase. Society's financial resources tend to be redistributed

in favour of the older generation. This trend may in the long run prove a threat to the labour supply and economic growth.

Prudent management of the environment and human resources is a demanding task, but it also offers great opportunities. A sustainable policy for welfare and social justice can be costly in the short term, but can in the long term generate greater potential for productivity and growth. Similarly, more stringent environmental standards can in the long run benefit business. The possibility of combining social welfare and economic development with a sound environment is at the heart of the Swedish vision of sustainable development.

Vision of the future: sustainable policies

In a sustainable society a high rate of growth, full employment, social justice, cohesion and security will go hand in hand with an environment that is clean and fit for human beings. It is a question of building a society that meets the needs of the present without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The society of the future must not overstep the limits of what the environment and human health can tolerate.

To achieve this long-term objective, economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection must interact and be managed in such a way as to strengthen one another.

Implementing a new, long-term sustainable development policy will require cooperation at the local, regional and national levels, in the EU and globally. Trade and capital flows must be organized in such a way as to increase the willingness and ability of market operators to adopt longer-term behaviour. A global economy calls for a global sustainability strategy. Sweden attaches great importance to international cooperation on strategies and measures that promote sustainable development. However, all measures must enjoy popular support and require active participation on the part of the citizens.



Implementation and policy instruments

The function of the policy is to establish a framework and make it possible for everybody to have a say in and contribute to the adjustment process. The aim is, with the help of tools and incentives, to encourage public authorities, enterprises, organizations and the public to act in such a way as to promote sustainable development.

Some of these tools and incentives are of a general nature and are described below.

Legislation

Legislation is one of the most important tools for supporting efforts towards a sustainable society. An important element of environmental legislation is to refine legislation to make it possible to combine a sound environment with social and economic development. One example of successful legislation is the amendments and consolidation of environmental legislation embodied in the Environmental Code.

The Government may initiate new or amended legislation or guidelines in order to strengthen support for the shift to sustainable development.

Spatial planning

There have always been visions of the good society of the future. As human activities have become more complex and ever larger numbers of people have to share the space available, the role of spatial planning

has become increasingly important. One of the most important tasks in this connection is to adopt a holistic approach and not focus on the physical environment alone. The important thing is to plan for community care, safety, security, infrastructure, industry and employment, natural resources, housing, amenities and a good living environment, while informing the citizens so that they feel involved.

Central government supports spatial planning by means of economic instruments and legislation, as well as by providing various tools, including planning documentation and methods for analysis and assessment.



Sectoral integration and a holistic approach generates synergies

If we are to achieve sustainable development, all of us, whether in the private sector, the public sector or organizations, and in our everyday lives, must take sustainability aspects into account when we make decisions, whether of a short- or long-term nature. A more holistic approach is needed to problems and solutions in order to generate synergies between

different areas. Environmental, economic and social action and reform programmes should be designed in such a way as to be mutually supportive.

Sectoral integration is practised in many policy areas. The aim is to integrate overall objectives in one sector into other areas and sectors. Cooperation is essential in order to coordinate measures taken by the authorities. Learning, exchanges of experience, constant improvement, a systemic approach and cost-effectiveness are important elements of the ongoing sectoral integration process.

Broad strategies

Broad strategies provide effective support, not least when it comes to efforts to break down sectoral boundaries. Such strategies involve many different players and include a combination of policy instruments and measures.

In the environmental sector, for example, strategies have been formulated for the work on environmental objectives and climate change. Economic and legal instruments have been combined in this connection with voluntary agreements at the same time as responsibilities are clearly defined. Another successful example is the integrated product policy (IPP), an integrated strategy for life cycle management of goods and services.

Economic instruments

The use of economic instruments such as taxes, charges, grants, emissions trading, subsidies, deposit-refund schemes and green certificates is an effective

way of increasing the pace of the adjustment process. The main purpose of taxes is to finance public commitments. They are also used to contribute to an equitable distribution of income and wealth, as well as promoting better use of national resources, including natural resources. Raising the taxes on activities that are harmful to the environment and reducing tax on labour – ‘green tax switching’ – is an example of a tax policy that promotes both economic and ecological sustainability.



Impact assessments

The purpose of impact assessments is to expose various aspects that are important in connection with decisions, to identify and analyse the main problems or conflicts of interest and to supplement and improve the quality of decision guidance data in order to provide a better basis for decision-making.

Development of methods for impact assessments has been in progress for many years, and such methods have been adopted for environmental, health and economic impacts. All bills and communications prepared in the Government Offices include an economic assessment and an environmental assessment. Health impact assessments are used in the public health sector to analyse and clarify the effects on public health of current policy and proposals for new policies in areas related to public health.

Broader sustainability assessments are being developed and are expected to be an important instrument for the purposes of impact assessments at the international, as well as the national, regional and local levels in Sweden.

Indicators

Monitoring and evaluation are essential in an objective-oriented society. Such a system must be capable of regularly monitoring and evaluating progress towards sustainable development objectives and the pace of this progress. The results indicate whether it is necessary to intervene in the process or whether it can continue according to plan.

A first set of Swedish sustainable development indicators was adopted in 2001 to describe Sweden's adjustment to sustainable development. They are presented in the report Sustainable Development Indicators for Sweden – a First Set 2001. The work of developing Swedish sustainable development indicators continues. The first set of indicators will be revised and adapted to the national sustainable development strategy.

Research and development

Research, development and lifelong learning are essential elements of a sustainable society. New technologies based on research findings are essential for economic growth and more efficient use of resources. Interdisciplinary research, for example on social science and social organization, conflict resolution, lifestyles, attitudes, values and standards, as well as

cultural assets, also plays an important role. It is also important to continue to bridge the gap between research and the practical benefits for decision-makers.

Increased investment in research and development is needed to increase the pace of the adjustment process.



Education, information and dialogue

Education, communication and information dissemination can help to identify important issues and problems, opportunities and solutions. Information can also reveal causal connections and increase public understanding for the use of various policy instruments.

The role of education is to provide people with knowledge and insights that will enable them to make responsible choices when it comes to behaviour and lifestyles that are consistent with sustainable development.

The dialogue between players at the local and national levels is crucial to future efforts towards sustainable development. Apart from the general public, the target groups for cooperation and exchanges of information and experience include young people, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), industry, minority groups, educational establishments and the media.

Institutional capacity

It is necessary to strengthen institutional structures so that they can integrate development issues into all policy areas and decision-making levels both in Sweden, in other countries and at the international level.

Effective coordination is also necessary to identify synergies and avoid duplication in connection with the implementation of programmes and strategies.

The complex task of combining short- and long-term processes with a holistic approach is a major challenge that calls for active leadership, adaptability, cost-effectiveness, responsibility and training.

International activities as regards sustainable development

The national sustainable development strategy has a national focus, but is related to international efforts in this area and is consistent with international strategies prepared by bodies in which Sweden is represented.

The main responsibility for sustainable development is on individual states, although globalization has increased mutual dependence. The unequal distribution of resources, demographic factors and poverty, together with lifestyles and consumption based on high energy and materials turnover threaten the earth's life-sustaining ecosystems. Sustainable development calls for measures at the global, regional, national and local levels in both developed and developing countries. Democratic government and the political will of the governments in individual countries are essential for achieving sustainable development.

Sweden's international efforts as regards sustainable development take place mainly in international organizations such as the UN, EU, OECD, WTO, the Nordic Council of Ministers and Baltic 21 and in the framework of international environmental conventions and development cooperation. These efforts include the extensive negotiations within the Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in preparation for the Johannesburg summit and within the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The fight against poverty

Combating poverty is essential to successful global efforts with respect to sustainable development. Poverty is closely linked to scarce resources and land use issues, which in turn lead to the depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation, for example in the form of soil erosion and deforestation.

There is now international agreement that poverty eradication is a common challenge. Sweden fully supports the UN Millennium Declaration and is committed to achieving the eight millennium development objectives for international development:

- eradicate extreme poverty and hunger,
- improve maternal health,
- achieve universal primary education,
- combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases,
- promote gender equality and empower women,
- ensure environmental sustainability,
- reduce child mortality, and
- develop a global partnership for development.

Sustainable consumption and production

The balance with respect to sustainable consumption and production patterns is changing. High energy and materials turnover no longer occurs exclusively in the rich world. Middle-income and developing countries have now adopted Western consumption patterns too, and this makes it necessary to pay more attention to the situation as regards natural resources and ecosystems.

Development of economically and environmentally sound energy systems and efficient transport systems that reduce emissions of greenhouse gases are two important areas for Swedish action. Support for institutional frameworks, environment management systems and environmentally sound production are important private sector areas. Sweden's priorities as regards the preservation of life-sustaining ecosystems are integrated systems for sustainable agriculture and forestry, soil conservation, biological diversity and genetic resources.

Freshwater resources

Over extraction, pollution and increased competition for water resources are increasingly important concerns in the context of development cooperation. Sweden helped to set up Global Water Partnership (GWP), an international network for water stakeholders, and supports the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA). This year, in preparation for the Johannesburg summit, Sweden took the initiative of strengthening the network by setting up the Global Water Partnership Organisation (GWPO), with a secretariat in Stockholm.

Atmosphere and climate

Agreement was reached in 2001 under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change on further support to the developing countries, of which capacity-building, technology transfer and assistance in reducing the damage caused by climate change are important elements. Sweden will finance measures in various sectors to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

Sweden has also adopted an action programme with a view to improving the capacity of other countries for implementing international agreements on the phasing out of substances that deplete the ozone layer.



Peace and security

Peace and security are essential to sustainable development. It is important in the context of security and defence to emphasize the role of defence in sustainable development. The Swedish Armed Forces must be capable of defending the country against armed attacks. The Armed Forces must also contribute to peace and security in other countries by undertaking and supporting peace-promoting operations and cooperation that promotes security.

Sustainable development strategies

Baltic 21

Sweden has had a leading role in Agenda 21 programmes for the Baltic Sea region, i.e. Baltic 21, a regional cooperation project between 11 countries in the Baltic Sea region and the European Commission, various sectoral organizations and NGOs, including environmental organizations. Baltic 21 was adopted in 1998. The purpose of Baltic 21 is to achieve sustainable development in the region within 30 years.

Baltic 21 focuses on eight sectors, i.e. agriculture, energy, fisheries, forestry, industry, tourism, transport and education. The region's leading position in the IT sector will also be strengthened within the framework of the Northern Dimension Action Plan. Concrete action programmes have been formulated for implementation of Baltic 21 in all sectors.

Nordic sustainable development strategy

The Nordic Council of Ministers has adopted a Nordic sustainable development strategy, Sustainable Development – a New Policy for the Nordic Countries. The Nordic strategy entered into force on 1 January 2001. The central issues addressed in the strategy are climate change, biological diversity, protection of the marine environment, chemicals, food safety, energy efficiency and renewable energy, and sustainable transport systems, as well as sustainable development in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors and in industry and business.

The ecological aspect dominates this first version of the strategy, and the economic and social aspects will be developed in future versions.

The EU's sustainable development strategy

A sustainable development strategy was adopted at the Göteborg European Council in June 2001. The purpose of the strategy is to adapt the EU's policy to sustainable ecological, economic and social development. Four areas were selected as a first step, i.e. limiting climate change, improving the transport system and land use management, addressing threats to public health, and more responsible management of natural resources. A number of objectives and measures are formulated for each priority area and timetables are specified for implementation. The objectives are a complement to the social and economic objectives adopted within the framework of the Lisbon Process. A strategy for the EU's work on global sustainable development will be adopted by the Commission as a complement to the above strategy prior to the World Summit in Johannesburg.

OECD's sustainability strategy

The OECD countries adopted a sustainable development policy in 2001. It contains six policy recommendations on effective and working markets, management of climate change, management of natural resources, the use of science and technology, the strengthening of decision-making and information systems, and linkages with the global economy.

Local activities as regards sustainable development

Agenda 21 has a prominent place in sustainable development activities. Few UN conferences have made such an impact at the local level as the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. All Swedish local authorities are involved in this effort in one way or another, and more than 70 per cent of them have adopted local Agenda 21 plans or programmes. Many different groups, voluntary organizations and enterprises have taken part in local Agenda 21 activities.

International cooperation is important also in the context of local Agenda 21 activities. Many Swedish local authorities have well-developed twinning arrangements, especially with Poland, the Baltic states and Russia.

National support

The Government, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and the Environmental Advisory Council arranged a series of seminars in different parts of Sweden at an early stage in order to publicize Agenda 21 and arouse wide interest in sustainable development issues. In addition, the Government allocated SEK 18 million in 1994–1995 to organizations and local authorities in support of local Agenda 21 activities.

In 1995, in connection with the 5-year follow-up to the Rio Conference, the Government appointed a committee – the Agenda 21 Committee – to coordinate, develop, monitor and support local Agenda 21

activities. The National Committee on Agenda 21 and Habitat was appointed in 2000, since the previous committee's activities now also included the agenda of the UN Conference on Human Settlements (the 'Habitat Agenda'), which was adopted in Istanbul in 1996. This Committee has written Sweden's national report on Agenda 21 for the World Summit in Johannesburg. On the basis of the results of the World Summit in Johannesburg in 2002, the Committee will present proposals for future work on Agenda 21, Habitat and sustainable development.

In 1997 Sweden launched an exceptionally generous grant programme for ecologically sustainable investments in local authorities by providing grants for local investment programmes (LIP) in order to speed up the adjustment process to ecologically sustainable development. A total of SEK 6.6 billion has been committed for the period 1998 – 2003. The government grants usually cover 30 per cent of the costs, and, together with the funds contributed by local authorities and business, the aggregate total investment is almost SEK 25 billion so far.

The increasing importance of the issue of climate change makes it appropriate to concentrate the government grants on measures calculated to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. Parliament therefore decided to phase out LIPs and to replace them with a grant system for measures to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. Grants for climate investment programmes were introduced in 2002.

Core areas

The Government has prioritized eight strategic core areas encompassing the most important elements of a sustainable society. These areas emphasize the importance of integration between sustainability aspects. Each core area is presented in this summary with an introductory description and some general objectives and measures selected from the strategy.

The eight core areas are:

1. The future environment
2. Limitation of climate change
3. Population and public health
4. Social cohesion, welfare and security
5. Employment and learning in a knowledge society
6. Economic growth and competitiveness
7. Regional development and cohesion
8. Community development

1. The future environment

The concept ecological sustainability emphasizes the ecological and environmental aspect of sustainable development. The efforts in this area are directed at guaranteeing present and future generations the prospect of a good living environment and prosperity. Natural assets and biological diversity are very important for public health and, among other things, for the possibility of regional and local development.

Today's environmental problems entail substantial costs due to production losses, destruction of materials, impaired health, destruction of the physical cultural heritage and depletion of both renewable and non-renewable natural resources.

The national strategy focuses on nature conservation and biological diversity, the sea and a non-toxic environment. High priority is given to measures to combat climate change, and a separate core area is devoted to this issue.

Objectives

The overall objective of environmental policy is to hand over a society to the next generation in which the major environmental problems have been solved. This means that environmental impacts must be reduced to sustainable levels.

In Sweden, ecological sustainability has to a great extent been addressed in connection with the work of developing the 15 national environmental quality objectives adopted by Parliament. The objectives represent a compass for environmental policy at all levels in Sweden and in our participation in the EU and international cooperation. 65 sub-objectives and several action strategies have been developed for the objectives.

The environmental quality objective A Non-Toxic Environment means that the environment will be free from man-made substances and metals that represent a threat to health or biological diversity. The objective A Balanced Marine

Environment, Flourishing Coastal Areas and Archipelagos means that the Kattegat and the Skagerrak and the Baltic Sea will have a sustainable production capacity and that biological diversity will be preserved. There will be rich biological diversity in coastal areas and archipelagos, with high experience value and valuable natural and cultural assets. Industry, recreation and other use of seas, coastal areas and archipelagos will be such as to promote sustainable development. Especially valuable areas will be protected against manipulation and other disturbances. The main objective of preserving biological diversity is sustainable use of the components of biological diversity and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources. The Government intends to present a sixteenth environmental quality objective relating to biological diversity to Parliament by 2005.

Measures

Three strategies have been formulated as guidelines for efforts to achieve the environmental quality objectives, i.e.:

1. more efficient use of energy and transport – in order to reduce emissions from the energy and transport sectors;
2. non-toxic and resource-efficient cycles, including an integrated product policy – in order to create energy- and material-efficient cycles and reduce diffuse emissions of pollutants; and
3. efficient management of land, water and the built environment – with a view to increased concern for biological diversity, the cultural environment and human health, efficient management of land and water, environmentally sound spatial planning and a sustainable urban structure.

More efficient use of energy and transport is dealt with under the core areas Limitation of climate change and Community planning.

Horizontal strategies are needed to achieve a non-toxic environment. One example is the strategy for an integrated product policy (IPP), which aims to reduce the adverse impacts on the environment that are caused, inter alia, by chemicals that are circulated in products. Sweden will seek to ensure that the chemical strategy now being prepared by the EU is an effective tool for dealing with the problems associated with chemicals.

Sustainable use of natural resources, based on a holistic approach according to which the various aspects are considered in the context of view of ecosystems or landscapes, is the most important element of preserving biological diversity. Sustainable forestry, agriculture and fisheries are the main elements, but other sectors such as energy, tourism and infrastructure are also very important. It is essential in connection with nature conservation to ensure local involvement and to make use of local knowledge and provide good development opportunities for those who are affected. The ongoing revision of the EU's fisheries policy will be crucial to efforts to put fisheries on a sustainable footing, but other international cooperation is also important.

The 15 national Environmental Quality Objectives adopted by Parliament

- Reduced Climate Impact
- Clean Air
- Natural Acidification only
- A Non-Toxic Environment
- A Protective Ozone Layer
- A Safe Radiation Environment
- Zero Eutrophication
- Flourishing Lakes and Streams
- Good-Quality Groundwater
- A Balanced Marine Environment, Flourishing Coastal Areas and Archipelagos
- Thriving Wetlands
- Sustainable Forests
- A Varied Agricultural Landscape
- A Magnificent Mountain Landscape
- A Good Built Environment

2. Limitation of climate change

Limiting climate change is a high priority environmental issue. Limiting the increase in the greenhouse effect due to human activities is a way of taking responsibility for the environment of our children. One great challenge is to reduce emissions of climate-changing gases, which, despite the efforts made so far, are still high in Sweden compared with the average per capita levels that are sustainable.

Objectives

The objective of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change is to achieve stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Together with other countries, Sweden is responsible for seeing to that the global objective can be achieved. Sweden's emissions of greenhouse gases, as a mean value for the period 2008–2012, must be at least 4 per cent lower than its emissions in 1990. By 2050 Sweden's total emissions should be lower than 4.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents per capita per year, and should subsequently be reduced still further.

Measures

To achieve these objectives, the Government proposes 2001 in a bill, Sweden's climate strategy, a number of measures on which implementation should start immediately. Attention is drawn, *inter alia*, to the need to disseminate information in order to raise public awareness of climate change, as well as other instruments. Continued tax switching, with higher taxes

on climate-changing emissions and lower taxes on labour, is one of the most important measures for promoting a shift to renewable energy sources. Local climate investment programmes are another significant measure. The strategy for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases also includes the measures that are being taken within the framework of existing energy and transport policies and of the energy bill presented by the Government to Parliament in March 2002. In the transport sector the bill proposes measures to promote alternative fuels and in the energy sector a new system to promote the use of electricity from renewable energy sources – 'green certificates'.

The Government will also instruct landlords of state-owned real estate to describe the measures they intend to take to reduce their use of fossil fuels. The Government has also launched a cooperation programme with the car industry with a view to developing environmentally sounder technology for the cars of the future.

A significant contribution to reducing the impact on the climate would be to reduce the impact caused by the manufacture and use of products.

The Government also proposes that Parliament should authorize it to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, provided that the EU takes a legally binding decision on distribution of emission rights among the Member States and that Sweden's ratification is synchronized with that of the EC and the other Member States. The EU decided to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on 4 March 2002.

3. Population and public health

The demographic trends anticipated in the next few decades will present major challenges to the Swedish economy – and to welfare.

Life expectancy in Sweden has constantly increased thanks to medical progress and improved habits. In 2020 there will be more than two million persons in Sweden over the age of 65. During the last decade or so the birth rate has been too low to compensate for the decline in the number of people of working age. This means that fewer and fewer people will have to support an ever larger non-working population. The health trend among Sweden's population, especially young people, has been very favourable for many years. However, there are now worrying signs that may eventually threaten this trend. Maintaining favourable health trends is an important element of the sustainable development strategy.

Working conditions today are often perceived as increasingly demanding, and the result is an increase in sick leave and early retirement. Public health touches on virtually all policy areas.

Objectives

Everyone's capacity for work must be utilized. The Government's policy aims to ensure that a larger proportion of people of working age remain at, or return to, work. Measures must be taken to keep older people at work. The social security systems must be designed in such a way as to encourage work and promote employability and labour mobility. They should also assure economic security in the event of loss of income in various situations. General welfare policy should contribute to redistribution and to reducing differences between the resources and living conditions of different social groups.

The overall objective of public health policy is to create conditions that are conducive to good health on equal terms for the population as a whole. The importance of public health for all three dimensions of sustainable development must be emphasized, and attention must be paid to the relevance of public health issues to demography.

Measures

In 1998 Parliament adopted a new pension system that is geared to economic development and demographic trends and ensures that pensions will never be so large as to be a burden on the economy. This also ensures equitable distribution between generations.

A parliamentary committee – Senior 2005 – is considering proposals that would make it easier for older workers to remain at work.

An action programme has been designed to improve health at work and to improve the situation of families with children. The Government has also presented an 11-point programme for improved health at work.

Parliament has in recent years adopted national action plans on alcohol and drugs in order to improve public health.

A bill containing proposals for a set of public health policy objectives will be presented in the autumn of 2002.

The core area Population and public health also includes food safety, elements of which are preventive measures in Sweden and the EU, rules on food hygiene, genetically modified food, food labelling and strategies for the treatment of animals. The sustainability strategy also emphasizes opportunities as regards health-promoting health care, increased physical activity and sound eating habits.

4. Social cohesion, welfare and security

Social cohesion and involvement, gender equality, youth development, a flourishing culture and freedom from crime are essential conditions for sustainable development.

Social vulnerability is a problem not only for the individual. It can also be a problem for the individual's family and neighbourhood, for society and for future generations. Some groups have never had a firm foothold in the labour market. Their lives are shaped by serious social problems such as substance abuse, homelessness and mental handicaps. There is a good deal of evidence that they do not get the care and support they need.

Crime entails substantial costs – both economic and social – for the victims and for society as a whole. The most extreme forms of crime can be a threat to fundamental democratic values and social institutions.

The task of increasing gender equality is a high priority. Power and influence and equal rights and opportunities for women and men as regards economic and other matters are central features of gender equality policy.

Other priority areas include efforts to increase the influence of young people and to improve their social environment and opportunities for starting a family and establishing themselves in society.

Sustainable development and a flourishing culture are mutually dependent. Taking cultural aspects into account in connection with decision-making and planning is therefore a major challenge for future cultural policy.

Objectives

The objective of social justice is to halve benefit dependency between 1999 and 2004. Efforts must be made to strengthen the ability of socially and economically vulnerable persons to take part in community life and protection of children at risk.

The objective of crime policy is to reduce crime rates and increase individual safety. A citizen perspective should be adopted in this connection. The overall objective of gender equality policy is to ensure that women and men have equal rights, obligations and opportunities in all areas. The objective of youth policy is to give young people the opportunity to grow up in a good and secure environment. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its principles should be respected in all policy areas.

One objective when it comes to promoting a flourishing culture is to protect freedom of expression and make sure that it can be exercised in practice. Another is to give everybody opportunities to take part in cultural life and opportunities for cultural experiences and creativity and to promote cultural diversity, artistic innovation and quality, thus countering the negative effects of commercialism. The role of culture as a dynamic, provocative and unconstrained force in society. Another aspect is the need to promote educational aspirations and international cultural exchanges and meetings between the different cultures in Sweden. Finally, the cultural heritage must be used and preserved in a sustainable manner.

Measures

Parliament passed a new Social Services Act in the spring of 2001. Among other things, the Act strengthens the right to assistance for persons in difficulties. A strategy has also been adopted for national support for skills development in the social services.

The judicial system has an important role both as regards citizens' confidence in the state and as regards their quality of life. However, the crime rate in a society is largely determined by measures in other policy areas. It is therefore very important to adopt an integrated approach that covers all policy areas,

both when it comes to reducing the opportunities for crime and to maintaining effective and balanced informal social control.

The main strategy for achieving gender equality and sustainable development is to integrate gender equality into all policy areas.

The efforts to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child are presented in a Communication on future child policy in the spring of 2002.

Cultural policy should be formulated in such a way as to give it a key role in efforts towards sustainable development. Everyone should have the chance to take part in cultural life and opportunities for cultural experiences. A conservationist approach to the cultural environment and to the everyday

environment would also reduce the use of finite materials. The importance of the management phase for the service life of objects of investment is emphasized. An important task is to find methods for interaction between conservation and use of natural and cultural environments.

Other important priority areas dealt with by the strategy include integration, diversity and indigenous peoples and minorities. Among other things, a national action plan has been adopted against racism, xenophobia, homophobia and discrimination. The Sami are an indigenous people, and a special regulatory framework applies to their use of land and water and to their self-determination. The integrated policy for national minorities is also applicable to the Sami.



5. Employment and learning in a knowledge society

Systematic investment in knowledge, a forceful employment policy and the creative efforts of many different people have made Sweden a leader in the field of education, research, employment and enterprise. Globalization and the speed of change, as well as the shift to a sustainable society, make great demands on the workforce and on efforts towards a sustainable society. Sound knowledge is essential if people are to absorb information and make choices, in the context of sustainability, as citizens and consumers and at work. Lifelong learning for all must therefore become a reality. Employment is also prioritized in the strategy on account of the anticipated demographic trend.

Objectives

Sweden aims to be a leading knowledge nation with a high standard of education and lifelong learning as a means to achieve growth and justice.

The objective of research policy is for Sweden to be a leading research nation where high-quality scientific research is conducted. The government organization for research funding must be an efficient tool for increasing the contribution of research to sustainable development.

Measures

Since people's attitudes and lifestyles are established at an early age, the work of increasing their interest in and knowledge of sustainable development starts in pre-schools in Sweden. This learning is then reinforced throughout the official education system. Pupils and students are encouraged to have a say and take responsibility. All publicly financed education, up to postgraduate studies, is free of charge for pupils and students in Sweden.

The policy measures in the school education sector are directed at disseminating new knowledge and new educational methods in order to strengthen the role of education in a lasting shift to sustainable development.

Financial resources are allocated to higher education, inter alia, to expand the higher education system, provide more student places, ensure more balanced social recruitment and increased accessibility, as well as for the development of higher education teaching methods. Interdisciplinary courses and courses on various aspects of sustainable development in the broadest sense are an important feature of many higher education programmes. The introduction of the state environmental management system is an important tool for managing the process of change towards sustainable development in higher education.

Declaring the objectives of support for civic education enables the Government to have a say in the courses and activities that include aspects of sustainable development.

An important task for the education system as a whole will be to implement the action programme within the framework of Baltic 21E, i.e. the Agenda 21 for education for sustainable development agreed by the ministers of education in the Baltic Sea region.

Research is also needed to enable politicians and other decision-makers to take decisions on the basis of scientific fact. But research on sustainable development also has to do with laying the foundation for a new way of thinking and acting. The Government has special responsibility for guaranteeing the freedom of research and supporting vital basic research and postgraduate studies. Research on the environment and ecologically sustainable development is one of the Government's priority research areas. The 2001 Spring

Finance Bill proposed additional appropriations for research on the environment and ecologically sustainable development totalling SEK 440 million for the period 2002 – 2004.

A new research organization was set up on 1 January 2001, with three research councils and a new agency: the Swedish Agency for Innovation Systems, the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research, the Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning and the Swedish Research Council, which has special responsibility for supporting basic research in all disciplines.



6. Economic growth and competitiveness

A high-priority task is to contribute to a stable economy with sound, balanced public finances, an economic policy of full employment, a sustainable pension system and continuous efforts to make both the labour market and product and capital markets more flexible and dynamic. The anticipated demographic trend in the next 30 years, which will mean that fewer and fewer people will have to support an ever larger non-working population, is a major challenge.

Sweden needs a strong and competitive industry and business sector. This means competitive enterprises that integrate social and environmental considerations into their business policies.

Consumption and production in the industrialized countries is the largest single cause of adverse impacts on the global environment. It is necessary to remedy this state of affairs and achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns.



Objectives

The objectives of economic policy are a budget balance of 2 per cent of GNP over the economic cycle and full employment. The Government's objective is for 80 per cent of the population between the ages of 20 and 64 to have regular jobs by 2004. The objective of halving benefit dependency is another important task within the framework of economic policy. The objective of industrial policy is to promote sustainable eco-

nomical growth and increased employment on the basis of more enterprises and growing enterprises. The main objective of consumer policy is to develop consumption and production patterns that reduce the burden on the environment and contribute to sustainable development.



Measures

Reforms are being implemented to increase the stability of the economy. Examples of such reforms are a new budget process designed to improve the budget balances, a new Sveriges Riksbank Act that enhances the independence of the central bank and reforms designed to increase the employment rate and improve social development, including work development and training.

Work is in progress on analyses of the tax system and development of environmental accounts. The Government's ambition is to implement a green tax switching programme that will involve a total of SEK 30 billion during the period 2001–2010.

The purpose of the Government's industrial policy measures is to create a better climate for enterprise on the basis of effective competition, competence and knowledge transfer, simplified regulatory frameworks, information and advisory services and capital where the private market does not function properly.

The programme Environment-Motivated Business Development, which focuses on sustainable products and business development, was launched in autumn 2001. The ongoing work on an integrated product policy (IPP) is also very important for a sustainable business sector. A sectoral programme, Swedish Environmental Technology Exports, which focuses mainly on air and water purification, waste management, recycling and renewable energy, has also been designed. The purpose of another ongoing programme is to contribute to technology development and strengthen efforts to supply technology and know-how to business, for example via networks between business and research. Another important feature of programmes in this area is dialogue and voluntary agreements with enterprises.

It has been proposed to set up a Forum for Sustainable Development to study cooperation arrangements between the Government and business.

Measures in other policy areas such as employment, research and development and education are also very important for a sustainable business and industry sector.

The aim of the Government's consumer policy measures is to ensure that products are functional, safe, meet high environmental standards and are supplied with correct and relevant information. Further development and expansion of voluntary ecolabelling would provide credible and simple information that makes it easier for consumers to choose alternatives that make less environmental impact than comparable products. The Swedish Consumer Agency's website, which provides environmental information for households, aims to make it easier for consumers to switch to environmentally sound behaviour.

7. Regional development and cohesion

There are both similarities and differences between different parts of Sweden. This poses a problem for regional development policy, whose aim is growth and vitality all over the country. General conditions such as infrastructure, local government economy, demography and education are crucial to development opportunities in all the regions. There is, moreover, a need for special measures to stimulate development in some regions.

New technology and entrepreneurship are also to be found outside the growth regions. In Sweden – as in many other countries – there is a strong link between regional development and agriculture and forestry. Although employment in these sectors has declined sharply. Agriculture and forestry, like other primary industries, are still very important to rural and sparsely populated areas.



Objectives

The long-term objective of regional development policy is properly functioning and sustainable local labour market regions that offer a good level of service all over the country. The objective of Sweden's rural policy is sustainable and environmentally sounder food production, employment, regional balance and sustainable growth.

To a large extent, the objectives of ecologically sustainable food production are embodied in the national environmental quality objectives, in particular the objectives A Balanced

Marine Environment, Flourishing Coastal Areas and Archipelagos, A Varied Agricultural Landscape, A Magnificent Mountain Landscape, Thriving Wetlands, Flourishing Lakes and Streams, Zero Eutrophication and A Non-Toxic Environment. The forest policy objectives are included in the environment quality objective Sustainable Forests; in addition, forests and forest land are to be used efficiently and responsibly so as to ensure good, sustainable yields.

The objective of Sweden's fisheries policy, which falls under food policy, is to promote sustainable and responsible management of fisheries. The objective of Sami and reindeer husbandry policy is to promote a flourishing Sami culture based on ecologically sustainable reindeer husbandry and other Sami industries.

Measures

The Government considers it necessary to adopt further aggressive strategies, combined with targeted measures, to strengthen sustainable and viable development in Sweden as a whole. The strategies that have been mentioned in this connection have to do with more explicit regional responsibility for development in certain policy areas, learning and programmes as instruments of development, interaction with EC structural and regional policies, regional growth programmes and regional efforts in the context of the environment quality objectives.

Rural policy measures are mainly implemented within the framework of the Swedish environment and rural development programme for the period 2000–2006. Among other things, the programme includes support for environmentally sounder production, conservation of natural and cultural assets and enhanced competitiveness in rural areas.

Fisheries should be put on a sustainable footing by applying the precautionary principle, adopting an ecosystem approach

and securing biological diversity. Measures in the fisheries sector are generally linked to international cooperation. Management plans for salmon and cod are being implemented in the Baltic Sea. Recovery plans for cod and hake in the North Sea will be adopted this year. The EU's Common Fisheries Policy is currently being revised.

Sustainable reindeer husbandry must be based on adjustment to the long-term productive capacity of grazing lands. Reindeer management has a central role in Sami industries and tradition and is thus essential to preservation of the Sami cultural heritage.

The Forest Principles adopted by the UN form the basis of forestry policy. The Government promotes sustainable development in forestry mainly by providing advice, information, education and measures to preserve forest biodiversity.

8. Community development

The design of the built environment, infrastructure, transport systems, energy use, energy supply and new information technology are essential to economic, social and ecological development both in urban and rural areas.

Buildings that are defectively designed, constructed or used can give rise to illness, destroy the environment and use too much energy.

Energy resources are crucial to the functioning of society and to all industrial operations and all components of everyday life. But some of our use of energy is also responsible for environmental impacts.

A properly functioning transport system makes people's lives easier and is an essential condition for sustainable economic growth in the country as a whole.

Information technology (IT) is part of the basic infrastructure that is important to enable individuals, enterprises and regions to develop.

Objectives

The overall objective is for Sweden to be a leader when it comes to a good housing environment and technology and system solutions for energy-efficient and environmentally sound construction and efficient management. Everyone should have the opportunity to live and work in good residential and commercial premises and in a stimulating and safe environment based on ecological sustainability. The environmental quality objective A Good Built Environment is also highly relevant in this context.

The objective of Sweden's energy policy is to assure supplies of electricity and other energy in the short and long term at a competitive price. Energy policy should lay the foundation for efficient and sustainable energy use and cost-effective Swedish energy supplies that make low impacts on health, the

environment and the climate and should facilitate adjustment to ecologically sustainable development.

The overall objective of transport policy is to ensure a cost-effective and sustainable supply of transport for the public and business throughout the country. The IT policy objective is for Sweden to be the first information society open to all. The aim of policy in this area should be to facilitate regional development by helping to create favourable conditions for growth all over the country on the basis of a good infrastructure.



Measures

One of the main reasons for the shift to sustainability is that people need a good environment. This includes factors such as well-being, light, heat and healthy environments, having a say in decision-making, efficient use of resources, a carefully designed built environment and resource-efficient real estate management.

The Government has drafted an action programme for a better-quality built environment, Future Design – an Action Programme for Architecture and Design.

Planning for sustainable communities, use of the best available technology, procurement based on a life cycle perspective and a holistic approach, coordination of the construction and management processes, research and development and information about and marketing of environmen-

tal solutions are areas in which various kinds of instruments and voluntary agreements with business can be developed.

The energy policy programme consists of two components. The first is a short-term programme focusing on increased renewable electricity production and reduced use of electricity, and the second is a more research-oriented and long-term programme. A new energy policy bill was presented to Parliament in March 2002; it proposes to promote the use of renewable energy sources for electricity production, more efficient energy use and a strategy for reducing the energy sector's impact on the climate.

The bill Infrastructure for a Sustainable Transport System, which was passed by Parliament in 2001, contains proposals

on the future direction of transport infrastructure planning. Sweden is also taking part in the review of the EU's Common Transport Policy. Fair and effective transport pricing is one priority issue. In the EU Sweden advocates developing exhaust emission standards for various types of vehicles.

In the IT sector, broadband networks are being expanded and the national backbone network, as well as regional and local main broadband networks, are being upgraded. A working group – Forum for IT and Environment – has been set up to study ways and means of making more use of IT applications to reduce environmental impacts and promote sustainable development.

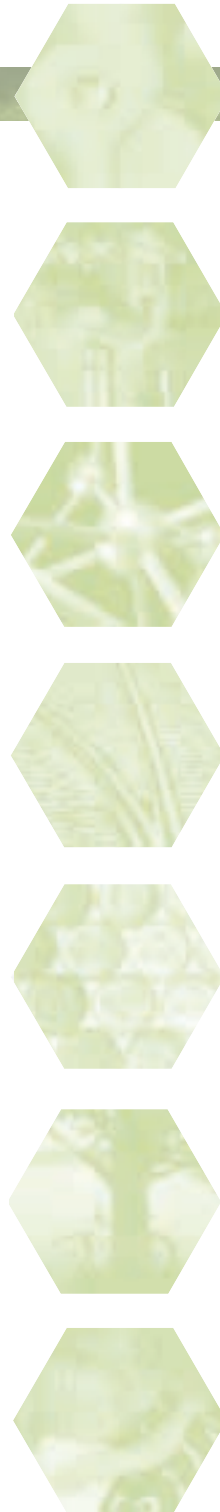
Monitoring and evaluation, presentation and revision

The adjustment to a more sustainable society is a long process that must be constantly improved. The results must therefore be monitored and evaluated, presented and revised on a continuous and regular basis.

Transparency, participation and public consultation are important in this context. Many players can contribute to the adjustment process and the participation and involvement of all are crucial to a sustainable Sweden.

A first revision in 2003

Sweden's national sustainable development strategy was presented to Parliament in March 2002. Consultations on the strategy with various groups started in November 2001 and are planned to continue up to the Johannesburg summit in August 2002. A final meeting will be held in the autumn. Both the results of the consultations and the conclusions of the summit may make it necessary to further develop and supplement the strategy. The first revision of the strategy should therefore be carried out in 2003. The results of the monitoring and evaluation, reporting and revision of the strategy will subsequently be presented in accordance with a timetable.



More information about sustainable development

www.sweden.gov.se

www.miljo.regeringen.se/hut/index.htm

www.scb.se/eng/omscb/eu/eu.asp

www.agenda21forum.org/eng/index.htm

www.norden.org/miljoe/sc/declholdbart.asp?lang=1

www.ee/baltic21/

www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/eussd/index.htm

www.oecd.org/

www.johannesburgsummit.org/

Sustainable development is the overall objective of the Government's policy. This report is a summary of the Communication *A National Strategy for Sustainable Development* (Comm. 2001/02:172), which describes the Government's efforts towards sustainable development.

This is the first time the Government has presented a strategy for sustainable development that brings together the social, cultural, economic and environmental priorities in the shift to more sustainable development in Sweden.

The summary is available on the Ministry of the Environment website www.miljo.regeringen.se. It can also be ordered from the Ministry of the Environment, phone +46 8405 10 00. Article no. M 2002.09



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