



REGERINGSKANSLIET

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# The Swedish action plan on narcotic drugs 2006–2010

The Swedish action plan on narcotic drugs states that long-term preventive work to achieve a drug-free society must continue. The work at local level is crucial to achieving successful results. At the same time cooperation within the EU and internationally must increase, as almost all illegal drugs consumed come from outside Sweden. Children, young people and parents will be given special priority as target groups in the coming years.

The Government Bill 2005/06:30 on alcohol and illegal drugs was processed by the Riksdag in the spring of 2006.

## A society without drugs means better public health and increased welfare

The drugs policy is based on people's right to a dignified life in a society that stands up for the individual's needs for security and safety. Illegal drugs must never be allowed to threaten the health, quality of life and security of the individual or public welfare and democratic development. The overall objective of the Swedish drugs policy is: *a drug-free society*.

The drugs policy is part of public health policy. The national public health policy is to help preventing the use of drugs by means of coordinated efforts at all levels of society. To achieve a drug-free society there are three sub-objectives. These are to

- reduce recruitment to drug abuse
- induce people with substance abuse problems to give up their abuse
- reduce the supply of drugs.

## Recruitment to drug abuse must decrease

In order to prevent people from starting to use drugs, measures must be taken in several of Sweden's public health policy target areas. Society can help strengthen the individual's resistance to being tempted into various drug cultures and abuse by creating integration and participation, secure environments in which to grow up, well-functioning schools and job market, good opportunities for physical activity, etc.

Preventive measures have proved to have a great impact on reducing recruitment to abuse. They are aimed at getting as many people as possible to dissociate themselves from drugs, getting those who have a positive attitude to drugs to change their minds and getting those who have tried out or use drugs to change their behaviour.

### The use of illegal drugs in Sweden

In 2004, 10 per cent of those asked, aged 16–84, stated that they had at some time used cannabis. This is equivalent to over 700 000 people

Recent years' school and conscript enrolment surveys show a reduction in experience of drugs among young people. The percentage of school pupils who had used drugs at some time was highest at the beginning of the 1970s when the figure was 15 per cent. In 2007 the figure was 6 per cent for boys and 5 per cent for girls.

About 26 000 people are heavy drug addicts. Almost 90 per cent of injection drug addicts are estimated to be infected with hepatitis C.

In 2004, 135 people died in Sweden as a direct consequence of drug abuse.

*Source: Drugutvecklingen i Sverige (Drug trends in Sweden), report 2007*

### The eleven target areas of Swedish public health policy

The overall objective of the Government's public health policy is to create social conditions to ensure good health, on equal terms, for the entire population. To achieve this, measures must be taken in a large number of policy areas by government agencies, county councils, municipalities and others. As a guideline for these efforts, the Swedish public health policy is divided into eleven target areas:

1. Involvement in and influence on society
2. Economic and social security
3. Secure and healthy conditions for growing up
4. Better health in working life
5. Healthy, safe environments and products
6. Health and medical care that more actively promotes good health
7. Effective prevention of the spread of infections
8. Secure and safe sexuality and good reproductive health
9. Increased physical activity
10. Good eating habits and safe foodstuffs
11. Reduced use of tobacco and alcohol, a drug- and doping-free society and a reduction in the harmful effects of excessive gambling

A successful drugs policy requires efforts in several of the target areas. Narcotic drugs are also specifically included in target area 11.

### **Method and skills development**

Preventive work must be based on knowledge and experience, since this is essential to enable drugs policy to be implemented systematically. The action plan prioritises development of knowledge concerning the drug habits of young people and women, the relation between narcotic drugs and other drugs as well as the relation between different risk factors and abuse. The action plan also points out the need to improve the skills of people working with drugs issues through better basic education, guidance and in-service training and by disseminating research results to them.

The methods of preventive work also need to be developed. This applies particularly to methods for following up and evaluating the effect of preventive measures and methods for identifying and reaching different target groups.

In general deeper knowledge is required of the differences between women's and men's drug abuse, so that their different needs can be met. More methods are needed that are adapted to women or men respectively, as regards both preventive work and care and treatment.

Children, young people and parents are central target groups for preventive work. A comprehensive view is needed on children's and young people's conditions of life if the work is to be effective. Measures are therefore needed in childcare, after-school care, compulsory school, upper secondary school and higher education alike, as well as in working life, social services, health care and police services. The National Institute of Public Health (FHI) has an important role as knowledge centre and as a support for preventive work at local and regional level.

### **Preventive work in schools**

School is one of the most important environments in the community for promoting the health of children and young people and preventing drug abuse and other risks to which young people are exposed. The school environment not only has an impact on pupils' learning, but also on their physical and mental well-being. Getting pupils to enjoy school is one of the most crucial factors for protecting them against different forms of abuse, violence, criminality and mental problems.

The National Institute of Public Health was assigned the task of spreading knowledge to decision-makers and civil servants in local authorities and to schools concerning effective methods of strengthening anti-drug efforts in compulsory schools. The assignment has been extended to include upper secondary school.

## **Drug abusers must be induced to give up their abuse**

All drug abusers must be offered help and when necessary care to combat their abuse. Advice, support and help must reach people at an early stage of abuse. The care given must be of good quality and aimed at a life free of abuse and illegal drugs. Measures must be long-term and all parts of the care chain – detoxification, institutional care, out-patient care and rehabilitation – must cooperate.

Documentation, follow-up and evaluation of the care and treatment given must be developed. As with preventive work, when caring and treating drug addicts, it is important to treat them in accordance with documented knowledge. It is essential to develop competence and methods for early intervention, for content and quality in both out-patient and in-patient care and for measures aimed at young people and homeless people with drug problems. There must be cooperation and mutual exchange of information between those doing research and those working in the field if these methods are to be of practical use.

## **Access to drugs must be reduced**

The number of drug crimes and seizures has increased substantially since the end of the 1990s. Access to illegal drugs is extensive and price levels lower than before. In order to reduce the supply it is important for the law-enforcement agencies, including the National Police Board, the Swedish Customs Service and the Swedish Prosecution Authority, to continue to look into how they can even more effectively combat both organised and small-scale drug crime.

The methods for fighting drug crimes, the organisation of the agencies concerned and cooperation between them and other actors in the fight against illegal drugs, such as the social services, also need to be improved.

## **EU strategy for fighting illegal drugs**

Almost all illegal drugs in Sweden come from outside the country. Well-developed cooperation within the EU and internationally is therefore crucial to effective anti-drug efforts. The EU and international bodies have an important role to fill since the problems associated with illegal drugs need to be solved across national borders.

The EU has adopted a drugs strategy for the period 2005–2012, which is based on UN work in the area. The strategy is to coordinate and supplement

the Member States' own measures. Each Member State is responsible for its own policy, but the strategy emphasises the importance of Member States drawing up their own national strategies. It is aimed at protecting and improving the well-being of the community and the individual and at providing a high level of security for the public. The goal is that the EU is to achieve a measurable reduction in the use of, dependency on and damage caused by drugs. It is also to achieve a measurable improvement in efforts to prevent production and illegal trading in drugs, money laundering, etc. In order to promote public health the strategy includes measures to reduce the damage to health as a result of illegal drugs, preventive measures and information initiatives. On the basis of the strategy the EU has adopted a more detailed action plan for 2005–2008.

In autumn 2007 the EU Council of Ministers adopted a special programme to support prevention and information activities in the Member States over the period 2007–2013.

Outside the area of public health there is EU legislation that also aims to combat illegal drugs. The EU has, for example, legislation to prevent money laundering of income from the sale of illegal drugs. There is considerable cooperation between police, customs authorities and judicial authorities in Member States. The EU also gives assistance to countries outside the Union to induce them to cease production of drugs and instead develop other industries.

## International cooperation

Sweden not only cooperates within the EU, but also within the UN, the Nordic countries, the Baltic Sea region and with individual countries. The overall goal for Sweden in international cooperation is to improve international control of production of and trading in drugs and to restrict demand. Illegal drugs are connected with poverty, HIV/AIDS, corruption and criminality, and ultimately constitute a threat to security and democratic development in the world.

Sweden's own drugs policy is based on the restrictive policy determined in the UN Conventions on drugs. In addition, Sweden has a long-term strategy for cooperation with the UN drugs body UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime).

Sweden must continue to develop strategies together with other countries to reduce the problems resulting from the use of illegal drugs. The action plan gives special priority to initiatives to strengthen international control of illegal drugs, combat drugs using Swedish development assistance, create more effective international coordination and uphold respect for the UN's drugs conventions.

## Implementation and follow-up

The main responsibility for implementing the Swedish action plan on narcotic drugs has initially lied with the national drug policy coordinator (the Office of National Drug Policy Coordination), who was assigned the task of initiating and coordinating development measures within the context of the plan. It has been important to achieve a more long-term structure for implementing drugs policy. From 1 January 2008 it is therefore organised within the structure of existing agencies.

The measures in the action plan concern a large number of agencies, all municipalities and county councils and a number of non-profit organisations. Collaboration between actors at local and regional level must increase in the coming period so as to achieve better coordination between health services, the prison and probation service and social services. County administrative boards have a central role in that they allocate funds and supervise measures taken by the municipalities.

The main part of the work covered by the plan is already being done with the funds each body responsible has at its disposal. In order to carry out the special initiatives in this plan and the action plan for alcohol policy, which is also included in the Government Bill, the Government is setting aside about SEK 260 million for each year in 2008–2010.

The National Institute for Public Health has been assigned the task of following up the objectives in the action plan on drugs. The Institute must present its evaluation to the Government by 1 January 2010. Every fourth year, as part of a public health policy report, the National Institute for Public Health must make an overall follow-up of the national public health objective, which also cover target area II that includes drugs. The next report is to be submitted in 2009.



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