

Summary

In this final report, the Swedish Delegation for the 2030 Agenda presents its proposals and assessments for Sweden's continued implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Delegation believes that by implementing these proposals, the Government can create favourable conditions to achieve the goals that Sweden has committed to by adopting the Agenda.

In Swedish legislation, the term 'sustainable development' is used in two ways: one broader definition encompasses the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, while a second, more specific definition, focuses on the environmental dimension. The Delegation consistently adheres to the broader definition, in accordance with the meaning of the 2030 Agenda.

A time of challenges – a time of opportunities

The transformation to sustainable development demands action at global, national, regional and local levels. The 2030 Agenda highlights the connection between different levels and the importance of partnership between government, business, research, civil society and others. The Agenda further highlights the interlinkages between different policy areas, underscoring that all political decisions must be preceded by a thorough analysis of their potential impact on sustainable development. The goals and targets in the Agenda are global and apply to all countries. The targets are defined as global and aspirational, with each country setting its own national targets, taking into account national circumstances. All countries are asked to act to achieve the goals both at national and global level.

Sweden's challenges

In several policy areas, Sweden's national objectives adopted by the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) are more ambitious and far-reaching than the targets in the 2030 Agenda. In March 2018, the Delegation reviewed the existing national objectives adopted by the Riksdag. The review concluded that existing national objectives correspond well to the 169 targets in the 2030 Agenda. In many cases, however, the national objectives have not been achieved. Therefore, action is needed in several areas to move beyond goal-setting towards achieving concrete results.

The review also concluded that the national objectives often lack wording that specifically refers to the broader definition of sustainable development as defined in the 2030 Agenda. It is thus difficult to discern what the cumulative impact of the national objectives is in relation to sustainable development. New and improved forms of coordination and governance are needed, as well as a leadership that is agile and acts with the long-term results in mind. Only then can sustainable development be an effective overarching goal of all policies.

The 2030 Agenda highlights the importance of the participation of all actors in society and that implementation of the Agenda is a shared responsibility. The Agenda requires changed behaviours at both individual and societal level. Efforts to improve and create platforms for dialogue to ensure active and long-term participation from multiple actors must be a priority in the efforts to implement the Agenda.

Information and communication about the 2030 Agenda is needed to increase awareness of and knowledge about sustainable development, and to maintain and increase innovation and engagement, and to create behavioural changes

Strengthening management and governance processes

The Delegation's proposals are directed at the Government and, indirectly through the Government, the Riksdag. The starting point for the Delegation's proposals has been to build upon existing management and governance processes and daily operations, since these are already ongoing and have a great potential to generate

impact. Thus, it is within these existing management and governance processes and daily operations of the Government and Riksdag – including national objectives adopted by the Riksdag, the central government budget, government inquiries and agency governance and operations – that the Delegation has identified the potential to improve and strengthen the work to effectively and successfully achieve sustainable development.

The proposals in this report focus on reinforcing and, to some extent, redirecting existing capacity with the aim of creating better conditions for making decisions that promote sustainable development, thus advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Taken together, the Delegation's proposals will lead to better conditions to achieve existing goals and thereby also the commitments Sweden has made by adopting the 2030 Agenda.

The Delegation's proposals to promote long-term commitment, strong political support and a strengthened implementation of the 2030 Agenda

- The Government should submit a proposal to the Riksdag, in the form of a government bill, proposing that a national objective for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, is adopted by the Riksdag. This will create conditions which promote long-term commitment and the strongest possible political support for the 2030 Agenda.
- Starting in the Budget Bill for 2022, the Government should present a status analysis in an annex, and a full account of the Government's work to implement the 2030 Agenda. The Swedish National Financial Management Authority should be instructed to develop a proposal on the specific details of the annex.
- The Government should appoint a committee of inquiry on the 2030 Agenda, with a mandate until 2030. The remit of the committee should be to follow up and review the implementation, and to develop policy proposals for advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The mandates of the members of the committee should be limited in time to ensure both continuity in the committee's work and renewal of members.

The delegation's proposals to strengthen the central government and public sector's capacity to work on sustainable development

- The Government should set the direction of the central government administration, by making an amendment to include the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the administrative policy objective.
- The Government should clarify government agencies' responsibilities for sustainable development through an amendment to Government Agencies Ordinance (2007:515).
- The Government should instruct government agencies to impose sustainability requirements in public procurement processes. The Government should also appoint an inquiry within the Government Offices to draft a special ordinance on sustainability requirements in procurements by public authorities.
- Through an amendment to the Committee Ordinance (1998:1474), the Government should instruct government inquiries to analyse the consequences of their proposals in relation to the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability. The Government should also enquire how the support to government inquiries can be reinforced to ensure that they are given the means necessary to produce such analyses.

In addition to these proposals, the Delegation makes the assessment that the Government should strengthen its capacity for coherent governance, which is a prerequisite for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Government should also systematically include the 2030 Agenda in all internal training courses for management at all government agencies, and for employees at the Government Offices.

The Delegation's proposals to enhance knowledge and strengthen research and innovation

- In preparation for the next national research bill, the Government should instruct universities and higher education institutions, research funding bodies and other relevant government

agencies to identify and highlight research and innovation needs in relation to the 2030 Agenda.

- In preparation for the next national research bill, the Government should investigate how to better stimulate and promote cross-disciplinary scientific knowledge.
- The Government should instruct the Swedish Higher Education Authority to evaluate the degree to which universities and higher education institutions live up to the Higher Education Act's requirements to promote sustainable development in education.
- The Government should instruct the Swedish National Agency for Education to develop a plan regarding the content, implementation and funding of skills enhancement and support measures to strengthen teachers' and school administrators' capacities to educate on sustainable development, and how this should be coordinated. The Agency should also be instructed, in collaboration with the Swedish School Inspectorate, to follow up how, and the degree to which, education for sustainable development is currently carried out in preschools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools in Sweden.

In addition to these proposals the Delegation recommends that the Government give priority to areas that contribute to the transition to sustainable development, in line with the 2030 Agenda, in future national research bills. In the next research bill, the Government should also promote research collaboration and exchange with the countries facing the biggest challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda, especially developing countries. The Delegation also suggests that the Government push to ensure that the next EU Framework for Research and Innovation supports the 2030 Agenda. Finally, national research bodies should strengthen their collaboration, and start assessing research and innovation funding applications in relation to the goals in the 2030 Agenda.

Enhanced opportunities at local and regional levels

Municipalities and county councils are responsible for many of the decisions and actions needed to implement the 2030 Agenda. The Delegation highlights how crucial it is for the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development to receive greater attention and impact in municipalities and county councils. To implement the 2030 Agenda, municipalities and county councils must utilise the potential for sustainable public procurement. The National Agency for Public Procurement must be given sufficient capacity and resources to provide the support.

The Delegation's proposal for enhanced opportunities at regional and local level

- The Government should enter into an agreement with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) by adopting a joint programme declaration for the continued implementation of the 2030 Agenda at local and regional levels. This agreement should be based on the Delegation's proposal for a national objective for the 2030 Agenda. Within the framework of the agreement, the parties should jointly develop suitable methods and tools for information dissemination and increasing knowledge about the 2030 Agenda.
- In a bill to the Riksdag, the Government should clarify the responsibilities for sustainable development in regional efforts to promote growth by making an addition to the objectives for regional growth.
- The Government should instruct county administrative boards to collaborate with other actors in their respective counties to ensure that the 2030 Agenda is achieved. They should also ensure that information on the progress of implementing the 2030 Agenda at local and regional level is easily assessable.

Participation of all actors

Implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda can only be successful if all actors and sectors of society engage and collaborate. By creating forums for collaboration and dialogue, the Government can make sure it has well-founded solutions and a publicly supported basis for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Delegation's proposals for dialogue forums

- The Government should organise a national forum on the 2030 Agenda. This forum would be a platform for the Government to gather various actors' input for Sweden's Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The participants should represent different sectors and actors. Children and young people, and those who traditionally are underrepresented in similar national forums should be invited to participate
- The Government should instruct county administrative boards to organise regional forums on the 2030 Agenda, with participation by representatives from different sectors and actors at local and regional level. These forums should be carried out in collaboration with the county councils and in consultation with municipalities and other relevant actors.

The role of business in the implementation

A thriving business sector, with sustainable business models, is essential to achieve the transformation to sustainable development. Long-term rules and regulations, and an open dialogue, are necessary to achieve this.

The Delegation makes the assessment that the Government should encourage new forms of collaboration by inviting businesses and representatives from the business sector to a structured dialogue, to discuss the role of business for sustainable development in Sweden, in the EU and at international level. New forms of collaboration between the public sector, business and research should also be encouraged to promote innovation and mobilise resources.

Public procurement and sustainability reporting are significant tools to steer towards sustainable development. The Government should continue its dialogue with different actors in society regarding whether there is a need to impose expanded sustainability reporting. The special challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises should be taken into consideration.

The Delegation believes that Swedish businesses must comply with international guidelines and regulations on sustainable development, and that the Government should continue to express that expectation. The Government should promote companies with sustainable operation models. Similarly, it is important that the Government extends the mandate of the Swedish International Development Cooperation (Sida) to create an enabling environment for businesses to engage in sustainable development

The Delegation's proposals for the role of business in the implementation

- The Government should appoint an inquiry on strengthened national legislation for business and human rights that fully respects the international conventions and guidelines that Sweden has ratified. The inquiry must take into consideration how Swedish companies are affected by other international regulations and other countries' national legislations. If the inquiry proposes a strengthened Swedish legislation, Sweden should also promote a similar legislation within the EU and at the international level.

The social partners contribute to the transformation to sustainable development

The Swedish labour market model has, over time, brought about significant improvements in labour market stability, and social and economic conditions for employees in Sweden. The model is important to Sweden's implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and the social partners are significant actors in Sweden's transition to a sustainable welfare society.

It is crucial that the social partners maintain the high level of ambition where it is currently high, while raising it where necessary. For

example, to respond to the considerable pressure to reach the climate objectives, the social partners can play a crucial role in creating good conditions for transition, including by adopting joint transitional agreements, and agreeing on terms for continued professional development. The social partners also have an important role in disseminating information and increasing knowledge about the 2030 Agenda among employees and employers.

The Swedish model for social dialogue also gives Sweden a unique opportunity to take a leading role in promoting these issues at global level and in multilateral cooperation. The Delegation considers that it is important for the Government to continue to promote the Swedish labour market model and actively work to protect decent work and social dialogue in the EU and internationally.

The role of civil society in the implementation

An independent, open and strong civil society is a cornerstone of democratic society, and is essential to achieve sustainable development. The Swedish Government should continue to promote and protect civil and political rights, including the right to organise, in all countries.

In Sweden, civil society organisations contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through collaborating among themselves and with municipalities, county councils, government agencies, the business sector and the research community. Government grants and grants from municipalities and county councils to civil society are important for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It is vital that such funding is long-term to enable more stable and sustainable operations.

Civil society organisations are providers of many key functions in society, for example welfare services, but also in protecting and preserving natural resources. Therefore, it is important to promote and enable collaboration between the public sector and civil society, for example through non-profit public partnerships.

Communicating the 2030 Agenda

The Government and government agencies should make information about their work on implementing the 2030 Agenda accessible to the public. This would enable different actors and citizens to stay updated and collaborate with government agencies. Such communication may also enable new or enhanced collaboration between different government agencies.

Open and factual communication can be a tool to strengthen individuals' knowledge and capacity to engage in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Through its provision of grants, the Government should make it possible for civil society to educate the public about the 2030 Agenda.

A great opportunity

The world is changing, in some ways for the better yet in other ways introducing new and difficult challenges. These global challenges demand action that leads to change. Political commitments and agreements that are followed up have proven over time to have a positive impact. Where there is a will, and countries unite to solve issues jointly, or where broad and long-term agreements are made between or within countries, real lasting change can be achieved.

Sweden has a favourable starting point for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, Sweden also faces important challenges. Based on Sweden's comparatively good conditions for achieving the 2030 Agenda, it has a responsibility to contribute to the global implementation of the Agenda. Sweden should therefore continue to push for the EU and international organisations to be ambitious and work to ensure a successful global implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Delegation's proposals and assessments aim to strengthen capacity to implement the 2030 Agenda at national level, but also to contribute to the global implementation of the Agenda. By acting to strengthen its own national capacity, Sweden will further be able to contribute to global implementation and thereby demonstrate real leadership.

Consequences of the proposals – and the cost of not taking action

The challenges facing Sweden and the world, including climate change and inequality, will be costly to tackle. However, the cost of not taking action is so high that Sweden cannot afford not to act. At the same time, the actions that must be taken to implement the 2030 Agenda are also an opportunity to generate positive impact within several policy areas, including good health and improved well-being, environmental protection, and lower levels of unemployment. For example an integrated sustainable business model will become a competitive advantage for many businesses, and generate long-term profitability. According to the United Nations, implementation of the 2030 Agenda will require massive investments. Yet, the UN also states that these financial resources already exist and that the solution is to direct them towards promoting sustainable development.

The fastest and most effective way to achieve the transformation that is needed is to use the power of existing management and governance processes and daily operations. The 2030 Agenda and sustainable development must become an integrated part of daily operations and not an add on.

The Delegation's proposals aim to enhance the work within existing management and governance processes and daily operations that are already funded. The proposals themselves will thus have no direct added cost, since they fit within the scope of the central government administration's existing financial frameworks. However, in some instances the proposals will require a shift in priority setting and re-direction of existing funds. It will be the decisions that are subsequently taken within the strengthened management and governance processes and daily operations that will result in the real transformation towards sustainable development. In several cases, shifting to sustainable development must be allowed to cost, since the cost of failing to make the shift to sustainable development would be much greater.

Several of the Delegation's proposals aim to strengthen capacity to propose well-founded actions. The proposals must be evaluated through a cost-benefit analysis, and at the same time an evaluation of whether the goals have been achieved. This requires follow-up, evaluation and analysis. As a result, sometimes decisions must be

changed, for example when an action does not have the desired effect or has insufficient effect.

Long-term effects and the cost of taking no action must also be factored in when considering the cost-effectiveness of a proposal. This includes proposals that could risk leading to higher costs long-term or irreversible consequences for future generations. It is also imperative to analyse potential conflicts between goals and harness potential synergies within or between different policy areas when calculating whether a certain proposal is cost-effective.

The Delegation's proposals all aim to enhance the capacity to produce a better basis for assessing which actions are necessary and most cost-effective as well as most likely to achieve the goals, and thereby advance the work of achieving sustainable development.

In conclusion, the Delegation's proposals in this final report can be funded within the existing budgetary framework. However, in some cases funding needs to be redirected and shifted towards sustainable development.