



Strategy for Sweden's support for democracy, human rights and the environment in Russia 2020–2024

Direction

This strategy governs the use of funds allocated under appropriation 1:11, item 3 Cooperation with Russia, in the appropriation directions concerning the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) for each budget year, and the use of funds allocated under appropriation 1:11, item 2.3 Cooperation with Russia, in the appropriation directions concerning the Swedish Institute for each budget year. This strategy applies during the period 2020–2024 and provides a total of SEK 389 million for the strategy period, of which SEK 324 million is intended for Sida's activities and SEK 65 million is intended for the Swedish Institute's activities.

The Government intends to broaden and develop support for democracy, human rights, gender equality, the environment and climate in Russia and to investigate the possibilities for broader cooperation with Russia in these areas. Cooperation with Russia within the framework of this strategy will promote democratic development in Russia and contribute to strengthened freedom of expression and greater respect for human rights and the rule of law. Cooperation will also contribute to an improved environment and deepened climate efforts in the Baltic Sea region, the Arctic, the Barents region and Russia. Activities will also contribute to promoting contact between the peoples of Sweden and Russia.

Sida's activities will contribute to the following objectives:

Democracy, human rights, the rule of law and gender equality

- Strengthened capacity among civil society in a broad sense and among relevant actors to defend democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Increased understanding among the general public for these values.
- Strengthened capacity among relevant actors to provide the general public with independent information and increase knowledge about human rights.
- Strengthened capacity among civil society and other relevant actors to work against discrimination and for gender equality. Increased understanding among the general public of the value of equal treatment.

Environment, climate and energy

- Strengthened capacity for the sustainable management of ecosystems, sustainable management and use of natural resources, conservation of biological diversity and reduced emissions in the Baltic Sea.
- Strengthened capacity to contribute to the climate transition and phasing out of fossil fuels.
- Strengthened capacity among civil society and other relevant actors to contribute to a better environment and reduced climate impact.

The Swedish Institute's activities will contribute to the following objectives:

Conditions for agents of change to work towards democratic and sustainable development

- Strengthened communication and dialogue and increased knowledge among agents of change for increased visibility and legitimacy for, and awareness of, democracy and sustainability issues.
- Mobilisation of and deepened collaboration between agents of change and other relevant actors.

Country context

There are still challenges in the area of democracy in Russia, and these are expected to remain. The trend for freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and media freedom is negative and the space for human rights organisations and other parts of civil society to operate is shrinking, particularly outside the major cities. In 2018, Russia came 144th out of 167 in the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index. There are major shortcomings in how the rule of law is applied. Corruption is widespread. In 2018, Russia came 138th out of 180 in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. Discrimination against minorities is a widespread problem and adequate anti-discrimination legislation is lacking. Respect for the rights of LGBTI people and minorities, for example, is low. The situation for people with disabilities has improved somewhat in recent years, but it must still be considered difficult.

Russia has taken important measures against human trafficking, but challenges remain. In politics, women are underrepresented. Russia does not have any separate legislation against intimate partner violence and has not signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the 2011 Istanbul Convention). Discrimination and violence against women are widespread problems. At the same time, this issue has drawn increased attention in Russia and a review of the legislation is under way, creating opportunities for cooperation in the area.

Russia faces major challenges in the area of the environment and climate as well. In recent years, the country has begun reform work in the area of the environment, which has resulted in, among other things, a comprehensive federal environmental programme and considerably improved environmental legislation. Priority areas include waste management and improved air and water quality. Russia acceded to the Paris Agreement in autumn 2019, but work remains to implement the relevant legislation in the area of the environment and climate. Russia has the second largest drainage basin area in the Baltic Sea region and is one of the three countries that emit most nutrients into the Baltic Sea. The country is also the world's fourth largest emitter of carbon dioxide. In the area of radiation safety, Sweden has good experience of supporting the development of relevant structures and frameworks. The proportion of renewable energy in Russia's total energy

production is low and there are prospects for promoting sustainable energy systems based on renewable energy, and in the long term contributing to the phase-out of fossil fuels through strategic energy efficiency measures in sustainable energy systems. Environmental cooperation with Russia is very important for improving the shared environment in and around the Baltic Sea, the Arctic and the Barents region. Civil society's engagement in environmental issues has increased, but environmental movements are also affected by restrictions on civil society's space to operate.

Activities

Principles and perspectives

Cooperation within the framework of this strategy will take its cue from the international policy documents agreed by the international community in 2015¹.

Cooperation with Russia will be characterised by a rights perspective, which means that human rights and democracy are to be seen as fundamental to development. Russia's commitments concerning human rights, including the conventions the country has acceded to, as well as the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris, will form the basis of this work. This approach involves giving visibility, ahead of each initiative, to individuals and groups who are discriminated against, excluded or marginalised. This is so that all people, regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion or other belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity or expression, are able to enjoy their rights.

Activities will be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable and will strengthen equality. Gender equality and the empowerment and rights of women and girls are both goals in themselves and a prerequisite and a means for achieving sustainable development. Gender equality will therefore also be a recurrent theme that should be promoted via targeted and integrated measures and dialogue. This means working to ensure that women, girls, men and boys have the same power to shape society and their own lives, and

¹ The development agenda comprises the 2030 Agenda, including its 17 Global Goals and 169 targets for sustainable development, the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) and the Paris Agreement.

that women and girls have the right to freedom from violence and to physical integrity.

Environmentally and climate-resilient sustainable development and access to environmental protection are prerequisites for realising fundamental human rights, including the right to food, health and clean water.

Work to combat corruption and ensure greater transparency will encompass all of the strategy's results areas through integrated measures. Targeted measures in these areas should also be considered.

Activities should be able to contribute to several goals in the different goal areas. Use should therefore be made of synergies between the strategy's different areas. Synergies will also be sought with activities within the framework of other relevant regional, bilateral and thematically targeted strategies, ongoing bilateral collaborations, existing bilateral and multilateral platforms, cross-border collaborations in the Baltic Sea region and other parts of Eastern Europe, and with the EU's policy vis-à-vis Russia. Activities will also be designed in a way that makes use of the experience of other Swedish actors whose activities are focused on Russia, such as cooperation between authorities on the environment.

Priorities

When implementing the strategy, Sweden will work to build broader and more self-sustaining relations between the countries, with a particular focus on people-to-people cooperation. Sweden will therefore endeavour to stimulate cooperation that can continue in the long term without being financed through this strategy. Young people are an important target group in this respect.

Activities will also contribute to improved conditions for Russian civil society and other agents of change to work towards an inclusive society, contribute to the long-term development of democracy, work to prevent conflict and demand accountability. Increased knowledge among civil society and the general public about the principles of democracy and the rule of law are key. Strategic support to relevant agents of change to improve their opportunities to work for change is therefore very important. This can include human rights in working life and the possibility of strengthened social dialogue between trade union organisations and companies.

A pluralistic media landscape is crucial if the general public is to obtain independent information and increase its knowledge about human rights. It is therefore crucial to have a multifaceted focus on media freedom and freedom of expression, including the internet as well as other kinds of digital tools and communication channels, and support for independent media in a broad sense, both traditional and new media. Similarly, work to combat disinformation is very important. In this area, collaboration with the EU and the European External Action Service's East StratCom Task Force is important.

There will be a special focus on vulnerable and marginalised groups. Preventing discrimination and violence on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, transgender identity or expression, or disability is a priority activity.

In the area of the environment and climate, activities will contribute to strengthened capacity among public institutions, as well as among civil society and other agents of change, and will contribute to Russia's work on implementing the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including the Paris Agreement, and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Use will be made of Russia's interest in cooperating with Sweden and other neighbouring countries to improve the environment in the Baltic Sea, the Arctic and the Barents region, and environmental cooperation that benefits Sweden. Priority areas include reduced emissions of greenhouse gases, improved air and water quality, chemicals and waste management, radiation safety, nuclear waste, and sustainable and efficient use of natural and energy resources, such as forests.

Forms of cooperation, channels and actors

Work to implement this strategy should be flexible and innovative and include innovative financing forms and mobilisation of additional financial resources.

The choice of cooperation partners and forms should be broad. The point of departure should be to use the partners and forms that most effectively contribute to the strategy's implementation and to long-term and sustainable results. Cooperation can take place with Swedish and Russian authorities, counties and municipalities wherever appropriate. Activities could also focus, for example, on cooperation between Swedish and Russian research

institutions, opinion-makers and representatives of informal organisations and networks, cultural practitioners and the private sector.

In the area of the environment and climate, cooperation should take place with public institutions, civil society and other relevant actors. Collaboration with international financial institutions is expected to be an important part of cooperation.

The point of departure for activities should be that initiatives are assessed according to their potential to achieve the strategy's objectives and create a positive impact in areas of mutual interest to both Russia and Sweden. This means a natural prioritisation of initiatives in Sweden's vicinity, but there is also scope for activities in other parts of Russia too. Initiatives outside the country's borders may also be considered, provided that the impact of the initiative is in Russia.

Follow-up

Major emphasis will be placed on identifying, evaluating and managing risks that may hamper the prospects of achieving results. It may be necessary to spread the risks through the choice of areas, initiatives or type of partner.

Activities within the framework of the strategy will be followed up according to the principles and processes stated in the Government's guidelines for strategies in Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian aid (UD2017/21053/IU).

The annual reports and the in-depth report due towards the end of the strategy period are to be produced separately for the activities of Sida and the Swedish Institute.

In addition to the annual consultations with the Government Offices (Ministry for Foreign Affairs), Sida and the Swedish Institute are to engage in an ongoing dialogue on the implementation of the strategy with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the relevant missions abroad.