

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy. It has a two-tiered system of subnational government, composed of 21 counties and 290 municipalities. According to the legal framework, it is a unitary and decentralized state and the Constitution recognises local self-government and guarantees LRGs' autonomy.¹



Unless otherwise indicated, all the information in this profile is taken from the previously published Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).²

1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

The 2030 Agenda has been included in every Statement of Government Policy since its adoption in 2015. This includes appointing a **Delegation for the 2030 Agenda**,³ issuing an action plan for the 2030 Agenda, appointing a national coordinator for the 2030 Agenda and drawing up a government bill on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The **Delegation's report** is one of the documents on which the government bill on the 2030 Agenda is based. In 2018, the government decided on an **action plan for the 2030 Agenda 2018-2020** to guide Sweden's work on the 17 SDGs. The action plan highlights six thematic focus areas and four key implementation factors. In June 2020, the government decided on a bill on Sweden's implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The bill was adopted by the Parliament (*Riksdag*) in December 2020 and contains an overarching objective that consolidates and clarifies Sweden's commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda.⁴

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

Implementation is based on a shared responsibility in which all ministers are responsible for implementing the 2030 Agenda in their respective areas of work. The **Minister for Environment and Climate and Deputy Prime Minister** is responsible for coordinating national implementation at the Ministry of the Environment. The Minister for International Development Cooperation at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is responsible for coordinating international implementation. At inter-ministerial level, the government has appointed a group of state secretaries who meet regularly (including 16 state secretaries representing all ministries, except for Prime Minister and the Ministry of Justice). In the Parliament, the Committee on Foreign Affairs is tasked with the follow-up.

In February 2020, the government appointed a **national coordinator for the 2030 Agenda**. He was tasked with strengthening, promoting and deepening the work of all actors engaged with the 2030 Agenda by encouraging collaboration and partnerships.

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

The 2021 VNR is presented as “**an inclusive process at national and regional level**”. Indeed, it states that “consultations with stakeholders from civil society, the business sector, municipalities and regions, government agencies and the research community have been an important aspect of the review”. The Government Office has worked with various networks and umbrella organizations to facilitate consultations with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, the **Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)**, Formas (the government research council for sustainable development), Union to Union, and NOD (a national body for dialogue and consultation between the Government and civil society). Also, special youth consultations were held to ensure that the perspectives of children and young people are reflected in the report. Regarding data and inputs, the report is based on Statistics Sweden's various status

1. See: https://www.sng-wofi.org/reports/SNGWOFI_2019_report_country_profiles_DEC2019_UPDATES.pdf

2. See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16033Sweden.pdf> (2017);

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/279582021_VNR_Report_Sweden.pdf (2021)

3. In 2016, the government appointed the Delegation for the 2030 Agenda, tasked with producing a report. The Delegation was composed of representatives from politics, higher education, civil society, trade unions, and the business sector. The Delegation's final report *Världens utmaning – Världens möjlighet* (Global challenge – global opportunity) was presented in March 2019. The proposals were drawn up in consultation with county administrative boards and other government agencies, collaborative bodies, regions, municipalities, the social partners, the business sector, civil society and the research community.

4. The bill emphasizes mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda as an integral part of regular processes, guaranteeing human rights and gender equality, and “leaving no one behind”. It tasks the government with submitting a written communication to the Parliament every two years. It also states that Sweden will conduct a VNR one every mandate period.

reports, the report by the Swedish Agency for Public Management and Sweden's government bill on the 2030 Agenda.⁵

1.3 MONITORING

As highlighted by the 2021 VNR, in total, 120 of the 169 targets in the 2030 Agenda are nationally relevant. The objectives set by the Parliament correspond well to 97 of the targets and correspond partly with 21 of the targets. Since March 2021, the coordinator for the 2030 Agenda has been working with **Statistics Sweden** to jointly make statistics available on how Sweden is performing in relation to the SDGs.

SALAR's board has also tasked its administrative office with analyzing how the organization's congress goals within each operational area relate to the goals of the 2030 Agenda, and with monitoring the implementation of the Agenda.

The **Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)** has developed the "SDG synergies tool" to examine how the different SDGs interact and to identify synergies and trade-offs between the SDGs based on inputs and multi-stakeholder dialogues. SEI has conducted analyses based on this tool in selected pilot countries such as Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Colombia, and a number of regions (sub-regions) in Latin America as well as with the European Environment Agency (EEA). A pilot project has also been launched in Sweden in conjunction with the 2021 VNR process.

2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

Through the **national coordinator for the 2030 Agenda**, the government is strengthening efforts on implementation, particularly at the local and regional level. LRGs participate in national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation through regular consultations (no decision-making). Overall, the VSR developed by **SALAR** in 2021 (more details below) has been an excellent vehicle for dialogue with the national government, which led to the opportunity to contribute to the VNR: SALAR participated in the consultations led by the National Government Office.

To a great extent, the political decisions in municipalities and county councils have a bearing on important parts of the 2030 Agenda. The municipalities also play a significant role in and for collaboration with the local business community and civil society organizations. As mentioned in the 2021 VNR, the Swedish Agency for Public Management's reports find that **the number of municipalities and regions making use of the Agenda increased between 2017 and 2019**. At the same time, sustainability work by municipalities and regions is not always directly linked to working on the 2030 Agenda.

2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

► In the VNR process



Comments: SALAR has not been involved in the 2021 VNR to the same extent as in 2017 when it was consulted and invited to participate with a representative in the national delegation to the HLPF. In 2017, they were also part of a reference group providing input to the report. Overall, LRGs were not directly consulted.

► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



Comments: Regular consultation of the LRGs (without decision making). The VSR has been an excellent vehicle for dialogue with the national government.

This assessment is based on the information collected in the VNRs and in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments' annual survey on the localization of the SDGs.

2.2 VNR REFERENCES

In the 2021 VNR, there is a section on "Regional and local level" as part of the presentation of institutional mechanisms for SDG implementation.

5. Other inputs include Sweden's implementation briefs to the HLPF in 2018 and 2019 on SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 4, 8, 10, 13 and 16 and Sweden's report to the HLPF in 2020 on the principle of Leaving No One Behind. The latter is available here: <https://www.government.se/information-material/2020/07/sweden-and-the-leaving-no-one-behind-principle/>.

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

► In 2016, the **SALAR**'s board adopted a position paper on the 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the SDGs, stating that LRGs are key actors if the SDGs are to be reached and that LRGs must be allowed to define their own strategies and goals adopted to local circumstances. Since then, SALAR's board has adopted a position on the government committee's suggestion to an overarching action plan for Sweden's implementation of the agenda (2019) as well as on the European Commission's reflection paper "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030" (2019).

► **SALAR** participates in the **Council for Sustainable Cities** founded by the government in 2017 and supported by a national strategy adopted in 2018 to develop green, healthy, safe cities in which people come together and which foster innovation (see below).

► The initiative "**Glokala Sverige: Committed to a stronger local engagement in the SDGs**" focuses on communication and knowledge capacity building amongst local elected representatives and civil servants in Sweden. The initiative is financed by Sida and co-organized by Svenska FN-förbundet, ICLD and SALAR. As of 2021, 163 municipalities and 18 regions are engaged in the network.⁶

► The **Council for Municipal Analysis** ("Rådet för främjande av kommunala analyser", RKA in Swedish), on behalf of SALAR and the Swedish government, has developed a set of 50 key figures for municipalities and 50 key figures for regions to monitor the implementation of the Agenda 2030 at local and regional level in Sweden. The set of key figures are built on already available statistics and data in Sweden.

► In 2020, SALAR launched the **Open Comparisons on the 2030 Agenda** based on key figures. Their purpose is to encourage local and regional authorities to analyze results, learn from each other and improve standards of quality and efficiency.⁷ RKA/SALAR has also provided municipalities and regions with guidelines on how to use the Open Comparisons on the 2030 Agenda.

► In 2020, the **report Public performance reporting on the 2030 Agenda in municipalities and regions** was released. The purpose of the report is to promote baseline comparisons and assessments in the transition to a sustainable future and to increase learning and inspire municipalities and regions to work even more vigorously than at present with the 2030 Agenda.

► The government of **Malmö** has also developed several local and international partnerships. In late 2016, the city held a major international conference with participants from 32 countries, Sustainable City Development 2016, concerning sustainable development and the local implementation of the global goals.

► **Åtvidaberg** is an example of a smaller town that conducts work to implement the 2030 Agenda. In December 2016, the municipal assembly adopted a sustainability programme for the municipality based on the 17 SDGs.

► The municipality of **Strängnäs**, which has 35 000 inhabitants, has reviewed existing goals in the municipality's comprehensive plan for 2014-2040 and other plans to see how they can be linked to the global sustainability goals. It has been found that there are links to almost all the 17 SDGs.

2.4 VOLUNTARY SUBNATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL REVIEWS (VSRs / VLRs)

The municipality of **Gothenburg** published a VLR in 2019.⁸ In 2021, **Helsingborg**, **Malmö**, **Stockholm** and **Uppsala** have carried out VLRs for the first time.⁹ In conjunction with Sweden's VNR, **SALAR** has conducted a VSR in 2021.¹⁰ Studies presented in the VSR show the spread between local and regional governments in their progress towards sustainable development and also the structural factors that are constraining municipalities' work. The report states that to advance, SDGs must be integrated in a clear way in regular governance in municipalities and regions. The latter need to develop impact assessments, create scope for transition and innovation, and commit to new solutions that lead to wanted long-term effects (optimized production, balance between quality and cost, changes in ways of working and methods, etc). The VSR presents a selection of cases on the role of local governments as democracy actors, builders of society, producers of welfare services and employers and summarizes the four VLRs produced by the aforementioned cities.

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

In December 2020, the Parliament approved a government bill with an overarching objective for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: Sweden will implement it to achieve economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development through a coherent policy nationally and internationally.

6. To know more about this initiative: <https://fn.se/vi-gor/utveckling-och-fattigdomsbekampning/agenda-2030/glokala-sverige/>

7. More information about the Open Comparisons on the 2030 Agenda:

<https://skr.se/tjanster/merfransOppna-jamforelse-Agenda-2030kr/oppnajakforelser/agenda2030.33988.html>

8. See: [https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Gothenburg%20\(2019\).pdf](https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Gothenburg%20(2019).pdf)

9. See: https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/helsingborg_2021.pdf ;

https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/malmo_2021.pdf ;

https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/stockholm_2021.pdf ;

https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/upsala_2021.pdf

10. See: https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/sweden_2021_0.pdf

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: The **Council for Sustainable Cities** was founded by the Government in 2017. The Council's task is to support the municipalities in their work on SDG 11. It will operate until May 2022. It is a forum that gathers 11 government agencies plus the county administrative boards and SALAR. It publishes LRGs actions for sustainable urban development are presented in the website *Hållbar Stad* (Sustainable City). Sweden's urban environment agreements, which were introduced in 2015, involve central government and municipalities/regions sharing the cost of measures to promote sustainable urban environments. The measures should contribute to an increased share of transport by public transport or cycling or sustainable freight transport solutions. From 2018 onwards, the urban environment agreements have been incorporated in the National Plan for Infrastructure. Furthermore, since 2017, the government has introduced two different types of grants to increase urban greening and promote ecosystem services in cities and communities, a grant for greener cities (2018) and a grant for greener and safer communities (2020).

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

The proportion of women in municipal councils is just over 40% and the proportion of men just under 60%. In the regions, just under half of councillors are women and just over half are men. In municipalities in 2019, one-third of the chairs of municipal committees were women and almost two thirds were men.

3.2 COVID 19

The 2021 VNR highlights the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced social challenges. Local governments are playing an important role as producers of welfare services and employers in the recovery after the pandemic, and in the transition needed towards a more sustainable society. In 2021, SALAR commissioned a study on how municipalities have integrated sustainability and/or the 2030 Agenda in their regular governance.

4. SDG INDICATORS¹¹

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		43.8 (2020)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	96 (2020)
	Rural	91 (2020)
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		0.001 (2018)
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		100 (2015, Stockholm)
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		5.7 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		0 (2019)

11. The data used for this table come from the UN SDG Indicators Database. See: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/UNSDG/IndDatabasePage>. More information on the country's progress towards the SDGs here: <https://country-profiles.unstatshub.org/swe>