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Insights on Setting a National Agenda

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Sustainable Development Goals for Sweden: Insights on Setting a National Agenda

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SUMMARY

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are intended as the reference point for international development until 2030. Most of the targets are, implicitly or explicitly, global; to be reached by concerted international action. But in contrast to the Millennium Development Goals, the SDGs cannot be achieved without far-reaching change in domestic policy and action even in wealthy developed countries like Sweden.

While some of the 169 SDG targets are very specific, others are idealistic, visionary and somewhat vague in terms of what is expected, even at global level. The SDGs and their accompanying political declaration make it clear that countries are expected make this national interpretation – setting their own goals, targets and priorities for implementing the SDGs, in response to national conditions and capabilities. Yet countries have received little guidance on how to do this, or how national SDG agendas will be coordinated to ensure that in aggregate, they constitute a viable plan for achieving the transformative global vision behind the SDGs.

The essential work of turning them into a national agenda is thus far from straightforward – and appears to be underestimated by many countries. In response, SEI carried out an experimental review of the SDGs to see how the national interpretation process could look, and what challenges it might face. This report provides illustrative findings and insights from this experimental review, focusing on the implications of the SDGs for development within Sweden's borders.

The review found that 81 of the 107 targets not dealing with means of implementation (which mainly concern development cooperation) would require at least some work to achieve in Sweden by 2030, distributed among all of the goal areas. Many of them deal with issues that are central to political and social debate in Sweden – the SDGs are far from a marginal add-on to current policy and action.

The review also carried out more in-depth interpretations of a selection of targets to see what issues were most relevant to Sweden; what we could learn about the current status and recent trends in Sweden in relation to the target and its achievement; and what policies are currently in place. This information would be vital for planning national action.

The Working Paper summarizes some of the main common challenges encountered in the interpretation process, mostly linked to the wording and focus of the targets themselves. It emphasizes the fact that this interpretation is by its nature a highly political process; data and scientific analysis are an important input, but only rarely point to national targets or means of achieving them. The interpretation process needs to be led by government, but with the full involvement of parliament and other sectors and stakeholders, in order to ensure that the SDGs become an agenda for real action at national level.

Finally, the authors discuss where the SDG agenda would fit in relation to current government policies and structures.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Agenda 2030

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have guided development efforts since 2000, with a clear focus on poverty and on developing countries. Their successors – the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the central element of the new Agenda 2030[1] – take a radically different approach. The SDGs respond to the interconnections between the three pillars of sustainable development, and between actions taken within different sectors. They thus form the basis of a more comprehensive and integrated development agenda.

The SDGs place a new emphasis on *universality*. The goals require action in and by all countries, not just those facing the largest human development challenges. Under the MDGs, the role of high-income countries was primarily limited to providing funding and support. While those countries will still have significant responsibility for the "means of implementation and global partnership" (e.g. providing development finance and debt relief, facilitating technology cooperation and access, trade reform), they will also need to align their domestic development policies and priorities with the SDGs.

The new goals also set out to spur *transformative* change towards sustainable development, addressing systemic barriers to social, economic and environmental progress (Kumar et al. 2014). Indeed, the text for adoption at the September summit is named *Transforming our World*, and the political declaration that accompanies the SDGs is rich with grand statements such as ". . . we are setting out a supremely ambitious and transformational vision" (paragraph 7b).

The final text of Agenda 2030, which is to be adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25-27 September 2015, is the outcome of three years of preparatory work and negotiations (see Figure 1).[2] Although this process has been based in the UN, it has been deliberately more inclusive and transparent than that created the MDGs, involving all member states, along with civil society and other stakeholder groups. The SDGs build on previous sustainable development efforts orchestrated by the United Nations, including Agenda 21 and the Rio Conventions from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to 2012 Rio+20 meeting, which is where the idea of developing a new set of sustainable development goals was first agreed (UN General Assembly 2012).

The shift in scope and approach between the SDGs and the MDGs is not only a response to a new set of common development challenges and recognition of the increasing interconnectivity of global systems; it also reflects a new political context in which the economic and political "centres of gravity" are shifting to new regions (eastwards and southwards), and the fact that even as the world has become so much richer in the past 15 years, the benefits have been unevenly distributed, and inequality within countries is growing.

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[1] Formerly referred to as the post-2015 agenda. In addition to the SDGs, the post-2015 agenda was understood as encompassing the Finance for Development process and a dialogue on technology facilitation.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from Agenda 2030 and the SDGs in this report are based on *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the final text for adoption at the UN Summit, released in August 2015 (UN General Assembly 2015).
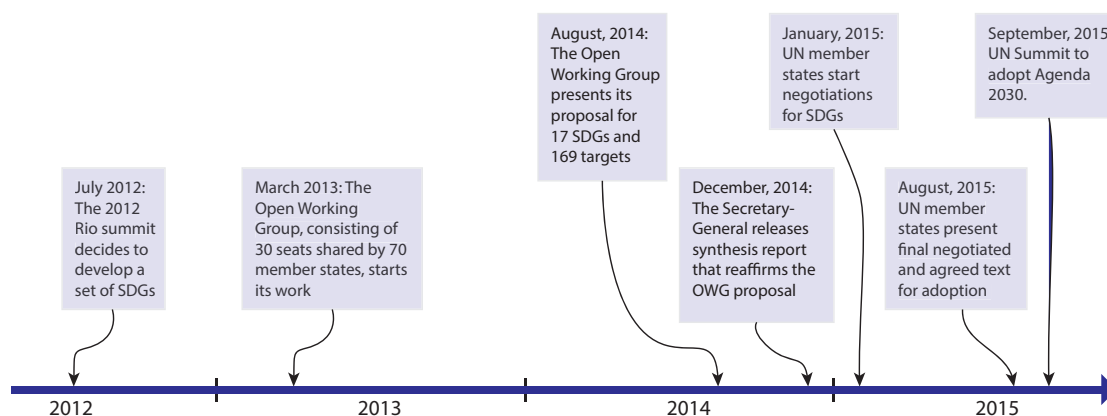
August, 2014: The Open Working Group presents its proposal for 17 SDGs and 169 targets

January, 2015: UN member states start negotiations for SDGs

September, 2015: UN Summit to adopt Agenda 2030.

July 2012: The 2012 Rio summit decides to develop a set of SDGs

March 2013: The Open Working Group, consisting of 30 seats shared by 70 member states, starts its work

December, 2014: The Secretary-General releases synthesis report that reaffirms the OWG proposal

August, 2015: UN member states present final negotiated and agreed text for adoption

2012   2013   2014   2015

Figure 1: The origins and evolution of the SDGs

The SDGs framework

The 17 overall goals of the SDGs cover a spectrum of development issues (see Box 1). They are highly aspirational and broad in scope (e.g. "achieve gender equality", "ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns", "promote well-being for all at all ages" and "promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems").

Distributed under these goals are 169 targets, which are intended to be more specific, guiding immediate action and concrete measures to achieve the goals. The extent to which the targets do this varies widely, and most leave significant scope for interpretation. Some define a desired end state and some define certain actions, but in many cases in vague terms. Some deal with a single issue, others are very multidimensional. Some specify the level – global or national – where an action should be taken or end state achieved, while others leave it open.

Alongside the targets addressing the actual development issue, each goal typically also includes two to four targets specifically on means of implementation, referring to, for example, the mobilization of financial resources (domestically and/or internationally), capacity-building, and access to information and legal frameworks. The 19 targets under Goal 17 are all on means of implementation, focusing on renewing the global partnership for development. For a scientific review of the targets see *Review of Targets for the Sustainable Development Goals: The Science Perspective* (ICSU and ISSC 2015).

Overall, the political declaration of Agenda 2030 is accurate in calling the agenda extremely ambitious, given its broad scope, the degree of change it aspires to, and the relatively short timeframe of 15 years in which it is to be achieved.

Follow-up and review of progress towards the SDGs are to be voluntary and country-led, and will take place at both national and global levels. National ownership is a key principle in this, not least as global reviews will rely on official national data to a large extent.

A set of global-level indicators to monitor progress towards the SDG targets is being developed. The Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDGs) was created under the auspices of the UN Statistical Commission earlier this year to draw together and refine – with

Box 1: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

broad national consultation – suggestions for global indicators. These will be adopted by the Statistical Commission in March 2016. A global SDG progress report will be produced annually, using these indicators, and regular reviews will be conducted by the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

At the national level, complementary indicators are to be developed by member states. Countries themselves are encouraged in the Agenda 2030 text to conduct "regular and inclusive reviews of progress". These indicators will be more closely linked to national priorities, targets and actions in implementing the new agenda. How far these will be expected to relate to the global indicators is not yet clear.

From a global to a national agenda

Since the original concept of the SDGs was set out in *The Future We Want* ((UN General Assembly 2012), the outcome document of the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (also known as Rio+20), the SDGs have been conceived of as universally applicable, but "taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of

development and respecting national policies and priorities". Inevitably, the many targets will have different relevance and imply different challenges for different countries.

Agenda 2030 states that:

Targets are defined as aspirational and global, with each government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances. Each government will also decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated in national planning processes, policies and strategies (para. 55).

So far, the intergovernmental negotiations on the SDGs have not addressed national-level implementation arrangements, beyond stating that national implementation should "build on existing planning instruments, such as national development and sustainable development strategies, as appropriate" and calling for "practicable ambitious national responses". Outside the UN too, the issue of national interpretation and implementation has received relatively little attention compared to the global goals, targets and indicators.

As 1 January 2016 – the official start date for SDG implementation – approaches, countries urgently need to explore what the global goals and targets mean in their particular context and what actions they can take to achieve them. This paper examines what this could mean for a country like Sweden.

A recent report by the Bertelsmann Stiftung (Kroll 2015) includes a preliminary stress test of high-income countries and their performance on the SDGs. It ranks Sweden as the country best prepared to take up the SDGs, but states that even the "fit five" countries have significant deficiencies and that implementation will be challenging to all countries. The ranking was based on a well-chosen set of general indicators, making for a compelling international benchmarking effort. It is a good starting point for discussing where countries stand on the SDGs. The question is, however, whether these indicators are the right ones for measuring progress in Sweden, given the country-specific context, concerns and priorities for sustainable development as they link to Agenda 2030. Will they help to identify policy and action that can help Sweden move forward on sustainable development?

In this report we drill deeper into the issue of setting relevant national targets. The aim is to identify some of the challenges and opportunities that might face national implementation in Sweden, and to contribute to debate both within and beyond Sweden on how to address implementation and how to make sure that the SDGs go beyond an indicator-based reporting exercise, to become a real policy and action agenda.

1.2 Scope and structure of the paper

As is true for all countries, implementing Agenda 2030 in Sweden will require three dimensions of action:

The *2030 domestic agenda* – which includes goals and targets dealing with issues that are more or less permanently on the policy agenda in Sweden, such as income inequality (Target 10.1), social inclusion (Target 10.2), climate change mitigation (Goal 13), substance abuse (Target 3.5), gender inequality (Goal 5), and sustainable management of terrestrial and marine environments (Goals 14 and 15).

The *2030 development cooperation agenda* – which includes Sweden's contributions to and impacts on poverty and development challenges abroad. Some relevant targets here are access to adequate and equitable sanitation (Target 6.2), universal access to modern energy (Target 7.1), reduced maternal mortality ratio (Target 3.1), universal primary education (Target 4.1), or ending hunger (Target 2.1). While such targets are not relevant

to Sweden's domestic context as they have essentially been achieved, they are priorities for Sweden's international development cooperation.

The *2030 international agenda* – which includes Sweden's contributions to and impacts on international sustainable development in various forms, including managing global public goods and resources sustainably (Goals 12, 13, 14 and 15), facilitating trade and market access (17.12), developing trans-border infrastructure (9.1), and encouraging transnational companies to adopt sustainable practices (12.6).

Sweden has a track record of effective international cooperation on sustainable development. However, implementing domestically such a comprehensive set of goals and target as is presented by the SDGs represents in part a new challenge for Sweden. This paper thus focuses on the 2030 *domestic* agenda.

The paper describes the analytical process we adopted for this exercise, which was structured around three key questions:

1. *Which SDGs targets are relevant for Sweden?*
2. *What do these targets mean in the Swedish context?*
3. *How can national SDG implementation be organized* (given the recognized need for national ownership and interpretation)?

Section 2 describes a rapid screening exercise aimed at identifying which of the 169 targets are relevant for Sweden: those that Sweden will need to work to achieve by 2030. Based on this screening we also drew up a list of possible critical goal areas for Sweden. Section 3 describes a more detailed interpretation exercise on a selection of targets deemed interesting in the Swedish context, illustrating how such a review can be a foundation for setting specific national-level targets.

Sections 2 and 3 describe findings from these two processes not only in terms of the results – which are only intended to be illustrative, not a basis for policy setting in themselves – but also insights about the *task of interpretation* itself – particularly the limited contribution that can be made by scientific analysis alone. These methodological insights can inform a government-led process of target setting at national level.

Section 4 discusses some organizational and governance implications of national action on the SDGs. For instance, how can a process for interpretation and action be organized with existing government structures, and how can leadership, ownership and coherence be promoted?

Finally, we present our main conclusions and recommendations, not only for the Swedish government but for any country grappling with the question of how to implement the new agenda. These conclusions and recommendations build not only on the present review but also on insights from several years of SEI engagement as a knowledge partner in the SDG process, including through the Independent Research Forum.

2. WHICH SDG TARGETS ARE RELEVANT FOR SWEDEN?

2.1 A rapid screening for relevance

Process

In screening the targets for relevance to the 2030 domestic agenda, we looked for:

- targets that are *applicable* in Sweden: that is, dealing with phenomena that exist in the country, given domestic environmental, social and economic conditions;
- targets that are not yet *achieved* in Sweden.

Under the second criterion, we excluded only those targets that we considered "steadily achieved" in Sweden: currently achieved and likely to remain so over the coming 15 years. Typically the excluded targets address basic development challenges such as extreme poverty, access to water or energy. (Such targets *could* of course become relevant again in Sweden if national performance deteriorates).

For this screening we excluded 52 "means of implementation" targets: those listed by lower-case letters (e.g. 6.a, 6.b) rather than numbers under each goal, and all targets under Goal 17, which deals with strengthening means of implementation and the global partnership.

We screened the remaining 107 targets for relevance by referring to available indicators and data. However, it quickly became apparent that this was not sufficient, due to complicating factors such as questions of scale, ambiguity and the multidimensional nature of some targets, which we return to in Section 3. A purely technical analysis was challenged by the need to use our own judgement, based on our own interpretation of a target. As a result it was not possible to properly quantify how far short of the target Sweden currently is.

The indicators we referred to for assessing current status included some that are commonly used across high-income countries, drawn from an assessment by the Overseas Development Institute (Scott et al. 2015), and supplemented with global SDG indicators from the lists proposed by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and submissions by international agencies collated by the UN Statistics Division (UNSTAT).[3] It is worth noting that even the proposed SDGs indicators do not directly and fully match up with the SDG targets, and instead tend to address only certain aspects of a given target.

We further looked at indicators used in existing national goal frameworks in Sweden, e.g. those used to monitor the Swedish environmental quality objectives (Miljömålen). Data was accessed primarily through Eurostat, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) databases, Statistics Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrån, SCB) and reports of national agencies such as the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket).

Findings

The initial screening suggests that *a majority* (76%) of the 107 targets are relevant for Sweden's domestic context. No targets could be excluded for being inapplicable to Sweden (all had at least some dimension that was applicable), while only 26 could be considered steadily achieved. The remaining 81 targets, where some work would need to be done to achieve them by 2030, were distributed under all 16 of the goals, and many dealt with salient national political issues.

This finding has several implications. The number and breadth of issues found to be relevant to Sweden highlights the universal applicability of the SDG agenda: it demands substantial, challenging action in developed, high-income countries like Sweden as well as developing

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[3] SDSN proposed a set of 100 indicators and the UN Statistical Commission assessed a list of 300+ indicators proposed by international agencies (SDSN 2015; UN Statistical Commission 2015). The UNSTAT list is the forerunner of that now being refined by the IAEG-SDGs.

countries. This is in line with the findings of a recent Stakeholder Forum study (Stakeholder Forum 2015).

It also suggests that the domestic 2030 agenda will require significant resources in Sweden: for analysing challenges, for planning and for implementation. The breadth of the domestic agenda requires an integrated and cross-sectoral implementation approach. What this could mean in practice is discussed in Section 4.

The screening further showed that the globally formulated goals and targets, and the proposed indicators (at least those available at the time), are problematic starting points for painting a clear picture of what the real challenges are in Sweden, or of what policy areas Sweden should prioritize in order to make the best progress towards sustainable development. This is a result of the goals and targets being vaguely formulated and open to interpretation. The vagueness of formulation has been the subject of significant criticism (e.g. The Economist 2015) but is also an opportunity – or even a precondition – for enabling ownership across countries and actors.

Our screening exercise can best be considered an indicative trial for a more formal and detailed exercise, including a comparative gap analysis.

A thorough process of interpreting the SDGs and formulating a set of nationally adjusted targets, defining levels of ambition and needs for policy action – and ways to measure progress – is needed. Carried out by the Swedish government in collaboration with other stakeholders such analysis can inform prioritization and formulation of goals and targets. As our screening revealed, this cannot be a purely scientific, data-driven exercise: it will necessarily involve political judgements.

2.2 Identifying critical goal areas

Based on the screening we could further identify six candidates for critical goal areas for Sweden. These are shown in Box 2 below.

It is impossible to put a comparative value on achieving very different targets; thus in highlighting some issues over others value judgements or political preferences are unavoidable. For example, we did not list Goal 5 on achieving gender equality among the critical goals, as Sweden is an international frontrunner on gender equality. However, our screening suggested that Sweden has not fully achieved five of the six targets under Goal 5 and addressing remaining gender gaps is high on the political and social agenda in Sweden. Addressing them would arguably also help achieving other targets. Here, we gave more weight to the evidently larger gaps to achievement under other goals, but it is likely that research teams with other areas of expertise would make a different selection and that prioritizing action is clearly a political call.

Box 2: Possible critical goal areas for the domestic 2030 agenda in Sweden

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

While access to education and school enrollment are both high in Sweden, for both sexes (Targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.3), Swedish students' scores in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) examinations for mathematics, reading and science are declining and now below the OECD averages (OECD 2014a). While according to the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) survey (OECD 2013), adult skills in Sweden are above average, the declining PISA scores suggests work will be needed to maintain or even "substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills . . . for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship" (Target 4.4).

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

In 2014, Sweden had a higher unemployment rate (7.9%) than the OECD average (7.3%); particularly poor was youth unemployment (Targets 8.5, 8.6), which stood at 23.6% (against an OECD average of 16.2%) (OECD 2015b). According to Eurostat, however, unemployment in Sweden is the second lowest in the EU, with 66.2% of the population aged 15-74 in the workforce (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise 2015). Regarding equality of pay, women earned 86.8% of men's earnings in 2014 (National Mediation Office 2015). Since 2008, several cases of abuse of migrant workers have challenged Sweden's long record of protecting labour rights and ensuring secure working environments (Target 8.8).

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Sweden is one of the most income-equal countries of the OECD (Target 10.4), with a Gini coefficient of 0.27 and Palma ratio of 0.958[4] (OECD 2015a). Income inequality has, however, been rising: Sweden experienced the largest increase in inequality of all OECD countries between 1985 and 2010. Since the mid-1990s, income growth has been lower among those with less than 60% of median income (Target 10.1) (Ministry of Finance 2015), in part as a result of reduced redistributive effect of taxes and cash benefits. There are also major challenges around social, political and economic inclusion of immigrants (Target 10.2) and safe and responsible migration (10.7).

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Sweden, like other high-income countries, is still not acting to reduce impacts from its consumption along international supply chains (Target 12.2). Sweden has strong regulations and policies on key domestic impacts of production (Target 12.4), but existing national objectives on air pollution and chemicals will not be reached with current trends. The volume of municipal waste is rising and reuse and waste prevention actions (Target 12.5) are gaining low traction (Swedish Waste Management 2015). There is a lack of reliable data on food waste (Target 12.3), but estimates of European averages suggest Sweden is not among the best performers (FAO 2011), and according to another estimate, the carbon footprint of the food wasted in Sweden is around 3% of Sweden's total carbon emissions (Environmental Protection Agency 2013)

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[4] The Palma ratio measures the ratio of the income share of the top 10% to that of the bottom 40%, the Gini coefficient the extent to which the distribution of income (or consumption expenditure) among individuals/households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution.

Box 2: continued

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Target 13.2 calls for integrating "climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning". Domestic carbon emissions have been reduced and decoupled from economic growth, though long-term emissions reductions (such as those set for 2050) will not be reached with current policies and measures (Environmental Protection Agency 2015a). Furthermore, emissions "embedded" in internationally traded products have grown considerably in recent years. Domestic action to reduce embedded emissions could target consumption patterns (Goal 12). However, other climate-related actions, such as on climate mitigation and adaptation in other countries (Target 13.1), would be more directly relevant to Sweden's 2030 international agenda".

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Progress in Sweden on addressing marine eutrophication and other pollution (Targets 14.1, 14.2) and overfishing (Target 14.4) has been slow despite interventions. The Baltic Sea is particularly problematic, as well as being important for Sweden. For example, emissions of phosphorous and nitrogen from agriculture, industry and wastewater treatment plants have reduced over the past years, but levels in the sea are not yet decreasing (Environmental Protection Agency 2014). The national environmental quality objectives for eutrophication, acidification and marine areas are not on track to be met with existing policy mechanisms (Environmental Protection Agency 2015b).

3. INTERPRETATION: WHAT DO THE TARGETS MEAN IN SWEDEN

The second part of our review involved a more detailed interpretation of a selection of targets that we considered particularly interesting for the Swedish domestic agenda. The aim of such an analysis is to identify what the key issues are around the target in Sweden, as a basis for setting national targets and indicators.

3.1 Deeper interpretation of selected targets

Process

Drawing from the full 169 targets, we choose one or two targets for each of the 17 goals that:

- have not been achieved, as measured by existing data or as commonly described in the political debate,
- have featured recently on the political agenda, and/or
- have been more or less successfully dealt with and thus offer potential for international learning.

The selection of targets give a taste of – but do not fully represent – the smorgasbord of issues that the SDGs may raise for a high-income country like Sweden, nor do they give a picture of Sweden's overall current performance on the SDGs.

Each of the selected goals was assessed on three dimensions, using available official statistics and policy reports – and, where necessary, expert judgement. The dimensions were: *trends* – have relevant indicators been moving towards achieving the targets in recent decades?; *achievement* – is Sweden close to the target?; and *policy efforts* – are appropriate policies and measures to address the issue already in place and being implemented?

Complicating factors in interpreting the SDGs

As has been noted, the SDG goals and targets leave broad scope for interpretation. Here we describe the main types of uncertainty we encountered in our interpretation exercise, and how they made the exercise more challenging – as well as opening up opportunities to tailor the agenda to national realities

First is the issue of *scale*. The SDGs are global in nature. Some targets, however, refer to a specific scale (national or global) while others do not. When a target refers to an end state at the global level (e.g. "increase share of renewable energy in global energy mix"), it gives little guidance on what action and desired end state are appropriate at national level. Further, some targets address issues that are by definition partly outside the sole decision-making authority of one country (e.g. transboundary water cooperation or human trafficking). Many such targets will (also) need to be addressed in Sweden's *2030 development cooperation agenda*, which will then need its own priority-setting exercise by the Swedish government and stakeholders, but this dimension is not discussed in this paper.

Many of the targets are comprehensive and *multidimensional*. These targets address many different aspects related to the goal area. This renders a single joint assessment of the target difficult, as trends, level of achievement and needed policies may vary between the different aspects. For example, Target 3.4, which addresses all non-communicable diseases as well as mental health and well-being. Similarly, Target 12.2, on "sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources" covers a very broad range of largely independent natural resources and uses, the statuses of which potentially diverge. When developing national targets for Sweden, it should be possible to formulate more narrowly defined targets that can be measured and assessed in a more straightforward way.

Third, some targets use *ambiguous* wording (which is probably for good political reasons, in order to secure broad buy-in from UN member states). For example, the end state or action is qualified with a qualitative term (e.g. "safe", "effective", "sustainable", "reliable") or calls for an action ("promote", "enhance", "strengthen") with no clear end state against which to measure achievement. For example, "Achieve universal health coverage . . . and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all" (Target 3.8). Sweden has long since achieved universal health coverage, but whether access to medicines is "safe, effective, quality and affordable" is debatable. Such ambiguity makes measurement challenging and an implication of this may be that more easily measurable targets gain more attention ("what gets measured gets managed"). To avoid this, more resources and time should be invested in developing good (qualitative) assessment criteria for such targets.

Some targets express *"zero visions"*. These targets call for "eliminating" or "ending" a certain condition, which may be excessively hard to verify in terms of achievement, especially if some degree of qualitative measurement is required. For example, Target 5.5: "Ensure women's full and effective participation . . ." or Target 8.5 "achieve full and productive employment . . . for all" are justifiable in an aspirational framework: lower ambitions might imply that some people can be left behind. But when can these targets be considered achieved? Should targets where Sweden has had *almost* complete success, and is an international leader be considered not yet achieved?

To sum up, these challenges suggest the effective national target-setting and implementation process will require quite a bit of work and commitment. The SDG targets could be said to be "smart", in the sense that they have secured international consensus on a uniquely comprehensive, ambitious and universally applicable sustainable development agenda.

However, the job of setting SMART – specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic and time-bound – targets is something each country will need to do for itself.

Findings

Table 1 below summarizes the results of this illustrative interpretation and performance analysis, assessing each dimension (trend, achievement and policy) as either negative (☹), neutral or ambivalent (😐), or positive (☺). It also outlines some of the uncertainties and complications we encountered in making our evaluations of particular targets. The full results are given in Annex 1.

It must be emphasized again that, as with the initial screening exercise, this illustrative analysis is not purely technical but necessarily involves value judgments and subjective decisions on what data to include and how to interpret targets. The summary below is meant to illustrate exactly this type of challenges in defining national targets. Hence, the results below should not be seen as an SDG scorecard for Sweden.

Table 1. Summary assessments and key interpretation challenges for a (non-representative) selection of SDG targets

Target	Trend	Achievement	Policy	Key challenges in interpreting the target
1.2	*By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions*			
	☹	☺	☺	**Ambiguous wording:** There is no national definition of "poverty" in Sweden. Poverty "in all its dimensions" is broad and vague.
1.4	*By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services including microfinance*			
	😐	😐	☺	**Ambiguous wording:** Many of the issues covered by the target are open to interpretation, including ensuring "equal access". Rights and access may be granted in law, but not in (normal or cultural) practice. **Multidimensional:** Patterns of rights and access to the many different issues could diverge.
2.3	*By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment*			
	☹	☹	☺	**Multidimensional:** While the incomes of smallholders is an issue in Sweden, it is questionable whether their productivity can, or should, be doubled.

Target	Trend	Achievement	Policy	Key challenges in interpreting the target
3.4				*By 2030, reduce by 1/3 premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being*
	☺	☺	☺	**Multidimensional:** Trends in different non-communicable diseases diverge in Sweden. **Ambiguous wording:** There is no clear end state for mental health and well-being.
3.9				*By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water, and soil pollution and contamination*
	☺	☺	☺	**Data availability:** Statistics linking health outcomes with environmental pollutants are generally poor.
4.4				*By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship*
	☺	☹	☺	**Ambiguous wording:** "Substantially increase" and "relevant" skills are both ambiguous; neither appropriate actions nor desired end state is clear. **Data availability:** There is lack of historical data on skills and multiple definitions of "skills" across data sources.
5.2				*Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation*
	☺	☺	☺	**Scale:** Trafficking is a cross-border activity that cannot be addressed within Sweden's domestic agenda only. **Data availability:** Violence against women is known to be heavily underreported. In Sweden this is improving, but it makes comparison over time difficult.
5.4				*Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate*
	☺	☺	☺	**Ambiguous wording:** "Recognize", "value" and "promote . . . as "nationally appropriate" are all vague formulations. "Shared" responsibility does not stipulate a clear end state. **Multidimensional:** The target addresses several dimensions with different trends.

Target	Trend	Achievement	Policy	Key challenges in interpreting the target
5.5				*Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life*
	☺	☺	☺	**Ambiguous wording:** "Effective participation" and "equal opportunities" are open to interpretation.
				Multidimensional: Trends differ between public and private sectors.
				Data availability: Statistics on participation are generally available but indicators for opportunities and real influence, which would be the relevant issue for Sweden, are not.
6.6				*By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes*
	☺	☺	☺	**Multidimensional:** This target addresses many different issues with diverging trends
7.2				*By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix*
	☺	☺	☺	**Scale:** One of a handful of targets specifically addressing *global* status. While Sweden is performing well domestically, neither the expected action nor domestic end state are clear.
8.4				*Promote progressively, through 2030, global resources efficiency in consumption and production, and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead*
	☹	☹	☹	**Scale:** Also specifically addresses global status and expectations on Sweden domestically are unclear.
				Ambiguous wording: "Promote" leaves ambition and end state unclear.
				Data availability: Statistics linking Swedish consumption with impacts action along supply chains are not available.[5]
8.5				*By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value*
	☺	☺	☺	**Zero vision:** Due to the ambiguity of "full and productive employment for all", it is hard determine whether this could be considered achieved in Sweden.
				Multidimensional: Trends on employment and equal pay differ among the listed population groups.

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[5] Note that a consortium including SEI is currently developing a framework of indicators for regular monitoring of global environmental impacts from Swedish consumption for the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket) under the PRINCE project (http://www.sei-international.org/projects?prid=2146).

Target	Trend	Achievement	Policy	Key challenges in interpreting the target
9.5				*Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capacities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending.*
	☺	☺	☺	**Ambiguous wording:** "Enhance" implies no clear ambition level or end state.
				Data availability: Statistics on research and development staff in private companies are not available.
10.1				*By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average*
	☹	☺	☺	–
10.2				*By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status*
	☹	☺	☺	**Ambiguous wording:** "Empower" is vague in this context and no clear end state is expressed.
				Multidimensional: Various grounds of discrimination and dimensions of inclusion make assessment difficult.
11.2				*By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons*
	☺	☺	☺	**Ambiguous wording:** "Safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable" all need to be defined to properly assess target.
12.3				*By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses*
	☺	☹	☺	**Scale:** Specifically addresses global status, giving little guidance on expected domestic ambition level. Also requires action along supply chains, and hence bi- or multilateral cooperation.
				Data availability: Data concerning losses along supply chains is not easily accessible.
12.5				*By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling, and reuse*
	☺	☺	☺	**Ambiguous wording:** "Substantially" implies no clear level of ambition or end state.

Target	Trend	Achievement	Policy	Key challenges in interpreting the target
13.3	*Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning*			
	☺	☺	☺	**Ambiguous wording:** "Improve" implies no clear level of ambition or end state.
				Data availability: Human and institutional capacity are difficult to measure and will require qualitative indicators.
14.1	*By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution*			
	☺	☺	☺	**Scale:** Transboundary, hence a target that cannot be addressed solely within the domestic agenda.
15.2	*By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally*			
	☺	☺	☺	**Scale:** Specifically addresses global status, giving little guidance on expected domestic ambition level.
				Ambiguous wording: "Promote the implementation" implies no clear end state.
16.4	*By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen recovery and return of stolen assets, and combat all forms of organized crime*			
	☺	☺	☺	**Multidimensional:** Covers a broad range of separate issues with different challenges and regulatory responses.
17.2	*Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7% of ODA/GNI to developing countries and 0.15 to .20% of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20% of ODA/GNI to least developed countries*			
	☺	☺	☺	–

A number of overarching reflections can be made from this illustrative analysis. Some relate to the method and some to the actual results.

The extensiveness of the SDGs agenda and possible issues that can be addressed under each target is overwhelming, especially in the absence of a clear narrative or purpose at national level to guide the analysis. Mapping out the issues and identifying indicators that can provide meaningful baselines and possible benchmarks involves time-consuming, resource-intensive research. This process needs to be planned and invested in.

In our analysis only one of the selected targets is assessed positively on all dimensions: Target 17.2, on fulfilling official development assistance (ODA) commitments. Another set of targets are more or less achieved and are supported by robust and "mainstream" policies, but merit attention from policymakers as current trends are moving further away from the target. These include Target 1.2 on poverty, 10.1 on inequality and 10.2 on social, economic and political inclusion.

Further, several SDG targets address qualitative issues that would be hard to measure quantitatively and to create performance scorecards for. Examples include "Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning" (Target 13.3), and "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life" (Target 5.5). There is a risk that such targets fall off the radar because it is harder to demonstrate and communicate progress. Avoiding this happening will require creative thinking on new types of indicators.

The three dimensions included in our assessment are linked: achievement is the outcome, trends the direction, and policy the means to steer towards the ambition. What is considered adequate policy depends on several things that are so far undefined or hard to know: the level of ambition (i.e. at what level is a target considered achieved); the future direction and pace of relevant trends; and how policy changes could affect those trends. It may thus be more useful to identify possible policy measures once the issues and ambition levels are set at national level, and then identify policy inconsistences or gaps.

We note that no targets showed a positive trend or were fulfilled with inadequate policy action. This emphasizes the importance of a supportive policy landscape. The linkages between the three dimensions further suggest an iterative analytical process is useful; while identifying issues and gaps can help in setting appropriate national targets, the targets will also determine the level of ambition, and thus the performance gap.

Finally, the process of interpreting and setting targets can and should be made more robust through proper involvement of policy officials, stakeholders and experts in the field, and through a facilitated and carefully designed workshop process. The issues that targets raise at national level or their relative importance cannot be determined objectively.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES IN NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

How far the SDGs will require new or adapted organizational structures and mechanisms at national level will depend on the current political environment and administrative structures. Few, if any, of the goals raise entirely new policy issues for Sweden, so the 2030 agenda should ideally be integrated into the existing domestic policy process, administrative systems and political debates.

As mentioned, Agenda 2030 states that national implementation should ". . . build on existing planning instruments, such as national development and sustainable development strategies, as appropriate".

National sustainable development strategies (NSDS) or plans were called for in the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10) meeting outcome document in 2002 (United Nations 2002). However, it appears that the high ambitions set out at Rio+10 have not been met. NSDS have, in most countries, been marginal, with limited influence on or engagement with the key government decision-making processes .Confining SDG implementation to the NSDS mechanism risks similarly marginalizing it in relation to strategic policy processes.

While Sweden abandoned the NSDS as a policy mechanism years ago it can, and will have to, assess what are possible points of entry to SDG implementation. Our assessment is that, if the government is serious about the 2030 domestic agenda, action should be instigated through established government structures, in particular those that are critical for cross-government coordination and for formulating socio-economic policies that drive real investment and economic development.

As the SDG targets are strongly interlinked, the actions that will drive progress do not necessarily fit within the current spheres of responsibility of the government ministries and agencies; thus, assigning specific targets or goals to one ministry or agency may hinder effective implementation. Even though most SDG targets link up with existing policy areas in Sweden, there will be a much greater need for integrated planning and action across policy areas. Integrative governance should therefore be promoted (while avoiding dilution by spreading responsibility too thinly). Coordination, knowledge-sharing and learning between ministries will be crucial to successful implementation.

4.1 Ensuring ownership and leadership

If SDG implementation is to build on existing institutional structures, the next question is who would take on the leadership. Member states' foreign ministries have led the preparatory work on Agenda 2030, supported by UN agencies. Central governments will clearly retain primary accountability and leadership during implementation, as they generally have the authority, legitimacy, mandate and convening power required to take decisive action. However, regional and local levels of government must also be mobilized.

Due to the overarching and cross-sectoral nature of Agenda 2030, all government ministries should be engaged. For this reason, the offices of the heads of government have key roles to play. Thus in Sweden, the Office of the Prime Minister should be a central pillar in the SDG implementation architecture. In this regard, Sweden is well prepared, already having a Minister for Future and Strategic Development Issues and an associated secretariat already located in the Prime Minister's Office. At the same time, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs naturally maintains its responsibility with regard to the international dimensions of implementation (as concerns the 2030 development cooperation and international agendas).

Parliament will also have an important role to play in keeping SDG implementation high on the government agenda, debating the issues and setting priorities for action, and ensuring democratic accountability in the process. This is motivated, not the least, by the fact that the SDGs are political and entering existing policy areas.

Rather than assigning responsibility for individual SDGs to different parts of the government, the approach adopted by the Colombian government in its own interpretation of the SDGs might be more effective. This involved identifying a number of priority themes cutting across sectors and even across both domestic and international action. One such theme, "formalization of the informal economy" has become a common priority for ministries that had never before consulted each other (Weitz et al. 2014). In Sweden, such cross-cutting themes could include "facilitating new investment", "driving technological innovation", and "enhancing resource efficiency".

Finally, making the SDGs more than just a reporting exercise also means that civil society and the business communities need to feel ownership and be incentivized to act. Goals and targets therefore need to be perceived as both meaningful and actionable by these constituencies. This need for broad ownership is clear in Agenda 2030's political declaration: "We acknowledge the role of the diverse private sector, ranging from micro-enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals, and that of civil society organizations and philanthropic organizations in the implementation of the Agenda" (UN General Assembly 2015).

Each of these actors, whether collectively or individually, will need to interpret the SDGs for themselves, asking: What SDGs are relevant for us? How will we contribute to global achievement? What targets should we set for ourselves? Government could facilitate this by providing support and incentives, especially in the private sector.

4.2 In pursuit of policy coherence

The Swedish government has already begun to explore one potential entry point for SDG implementation: the Policy for Global Development (PGD). PGD builds on the idea that political decisions in Sweden impact the lives of people in other countries and that development assistance alone cannot solve global poverty but requires involvement of several policy areas. The common interpretation of PGD has been that it is about ensuring that the needs of developing countries are taken into account in all policy areas.

Sweden was the first country to adopt an official policy like this, in 2003. The approach has now been part of the Swedish political agenda for more than a decade, although implementation lost momentum a few years after its launch (Agency for Public Management 2014). This year, with the relaunch of the policy, different ministries are tasked with developing action plans for PGD and aligning these with the SDGs. This is a promising approach to ensure the domestic, development cooperation, and international 2030 agendas are all considered.

In parallel, the OECD Secretariat has begun to conceptualize a shift from Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) to Policy Coherence for *Sustainable* Development (PCSD) – reflecting the shift from the MDGs to the SDGs. PCSD can be used as a framework to promote coherence between the multiple dimensions of SDG implementation and national target setting (OECD 2014c). The OECD identifies five levels at which PCSD is useful for SDG implementation, covering both vertical and horizontal dimensions of coherence:

1. coherence between global goals and national contexts,
2. coherence between international agendas (e.g. the MDGs, the SDGs, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change),
3. coherence between economic, social and environmental policy,
4. coherence between different sources of finance (public, private, international, domestic), and
5. coherence between diverse actions implemented by different actors (OECD 2014b).

PGD and PCSD represent different understandings of policy coherence that exist in governments today, and they imply somewhat different sets of coordination and coherence challenges. PGD focuses on ensuring that all government departments take into account the impact of their decisions on developing countries and development cooperation policy; PCSD on supporting coordinated involvement across the entire government machinery, and hence a more comprehensive and cross-sectoral implementation of the 2030 agenda.

Both PGD and PCSD will require coherence assessments to inform and guide the implementation process (Strambo et al. 2015; Nilsson et al. 2012a). These assessments will be needed to identify and foster synergies across SDGs, as well as to identify trade-offs between them and reconcile potential conflicts both between different national goals and targets, and between national and internationally agreed goals (including other agreements and agendas).

The emergence of PCSD and the relaunch of PGD are timely and can support integrated SDG action. Identifying and working with change agents and like-minded countries pushing for PCSD in the context of the 2030 agenda can enhance outreach and awareness raising around the agenda, as well as and support further development of the PCSD concept and associated methodologies and analytical tools.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sweden, like other developed countries, now has an opportunity to make the SDGs an agenda for action and not just a framework for tracking global progress. Momentum is building to define Swedish priorities for sustainable development in the 2030 timeframe, integrate sustainability in existing policy processes and politics, align sectoral objectives as well as domestic and foreign agendas, and build ownership of a 2030 sustainable development agenda.

No meaningful national implementation plan can be developed without an inclusive, government-led process to interpret the SDG goals and targets, for the specific national context. Such a process has both technical and political dimensions and the complexity of it seems to have been underestimated in Sweden, as it has in many other countries. Interpreting the SDGs at national level is a time- and resource intensive task that requires the full engagement of politicians and government ministries and should include dialogue with civil society, academia and the private sector. It needs to be done in a rigorous and politically accountable way, especially since many of the goals and targets raise not just technical challenges but politically contentious issues.

Our tentative screening and interpretation exercise was meant to illustrate some possible steps in such an interpretation process, and the kinds of results it might yield – and some of the challenges involved. We found that all 17 goal areas and a majority of SDG targets are relevant for Sweden. Every goal includes targets that Sweden will need to work to achieve, and some of these are likely to be quite challenging.

5.1 Rising to the challenges of interpretation

As discussed in Section 3, the formulation of many of the SDGs targets makes it difficult to set a baseline, assess progress, and define appropriate actions and policies. Some targets cover a wide range of issues, with equally diverse national status and policy responses. Some specify a desired *global* end-state, giving little guidance on what should be aimed for at national level. The wording of some is highly ambiguous or open-ended ("promote", "enhance", "empower") or qualifies desired end states or actions with terms such as "affordable" or "sustainable" that could be interpreted in many ways depending on context, expectations and subjective values. Some targets call for an end-state that is difficult to measure or definitively achieve ("zero visions") or at the other end of the spectrum specify an action but not the end-state it is meant to achieve. The large room for interpretation left in targets has been criticized as a weakness but is perhaps in fact a strength and pre-condition for relevant action, providing much scope for setting nationally relevant targets, action plans and indicators that indeed can guide transformation towards sustainable development.

A national overarching vision and narrative for the 2030 agenda, its purpose and ultimate aims, would be a helpful tool in guiding interpretation and building ownership. Such a narrative should ideally be developed across major party lines, but would also require commitment and leadership by the Prime Minister's Office (or its equivalent in other countries), being the unit that ultimately coordinates issues that span the whole of government. It must also be demanded by the Parliament.

An action plan based on a careful national interpretation exercise and gap analysis, and informed by such a national vision and narrative, can identify critical issues and the most effective actions that can be taken in and by the country concerned, and build national ownership for the 2030 agenda so that it is not seen as merely a UN agenda and reporting exercise.

5.2 Coherence and coordination

This review has focused on the 2030 *domestic* agenda in Sweden and has highlighted that Agenda 2030 is much more than a development cooperation or aid agenda – addresses many challenges that are central to current domestic political debate in Sweden, and the same is undoubtedly true in other high-income countries. The breadth of Agenda 2030 and the interconnected nature of the issues it addresses demand high degree of policy coordination and coherence across government ministries and agencies. It also complicates the question of where to assign responsibility within government structures. Horizontal coherence in target setting, policy and action between sectors and ministries will be needed, at every level, to ensure that trade-offs are dealt with and synergies exploited (Nilsson et al. 2012).

Vertical coherence is further required to align country actions and policies with the global vision. Transboundary spillover effects of domestic actions need to be considered in any country's SDG implementation strategy. Sweden is heavily dependent on imports, implying that to contribute to a global transformation, the country must give at least equal attention to the international and development dimensions of Agenda 2030: to reduce Sweden's pressure on global resources and public goods, and to support other countries in achieving the targets. Interlinkages across these agendas must further be considered as targets are set and action prioritized; for example achieving targets on climate change and sustainable consumption and production could make it easier to achieve other goals and targets such as those addressing health, enhanced food security, better access to water and more inclusive economic growth.

The international level also has a role to play in ensuring that SDG implementation by the various member states adds up to something that can achieve the larger global ambition. Transformative change will require countries to address politically and culturally sensitive issues, and to make far-reaching changes that might be, at least for a time, very challenging. There is always a danger that in their interpretation they will set ambitions too low, or "cherry-pick" those target areas they are already on track to achieve easily while deprioritizing the more difficult ones. The international community has a role to play in this by setting some common criteria, and perhaps organizing a process whereby national implementation plans are "peer-reviewed" by other member states. These various dimensions of coherence are considered in the context of Agenda 2030 in the PCSD framework and are highly relevant to the relaunched Swedish Policy for Global Development (PGD) (OECD 2014b). PCSD and PGD are promising frameworks for supporting governments in ensuring integrated and sustainable implementation of the SDGs.

5.3 National level monitoring and review

Current international efforts on review and monitoring of the SDGs are focused on establishing a set of common global indicators of progress, and building the capacity of countries to report against them. Based on our analysis, we would question how effective global indicators can be as drivers of change. Achieving the ambitions of Agenda 2030 will depend heavily on getting actions right at national level, and there is a risk that global indicators divert action to areas other than those required to make change in a specific country. When we tried to translate selected targets into issues of direct relevance for Sweden, the proposed global indicators were not particularly helpful in identifying issues on which Sweden would need to act to make progress towards sustainability or Sweden's current progress on these issues.

Putting relevant action first, we suggest that national indicators be given greater priority than global indicators. A review and follow-up system at national level for the nationally agreed

targets and indicators can run alongside the UN's global tracking framework, and ensure transparency and accountability towards citizens. To define such a national framework, countries need to take stock of existing indicators and create new ones to fill the gaps. National indicator frameworks should aim to harmonize with other countries, where appropriate through cooperation via OECD, UNSTAT and the EU, but must always prioritize adequate monitoring of issues on the nationally agreed agenda. This is important to make sure the SDGs go beyond an indicator-based reporting exercise to become a real policy and action agenda for sustainable development.

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ANNEX 1: INTERPRETATIONS OF SELECTED SDG TARGETS

This annex presents key points from our rapid interpretations for Sweden of selected SDG targets, as summarized in the table in Section 3. The focus is on the implications of these targets for action and policy within Sweden – the "domestic 2030 agenda" – rather than on for Sweden's international or development cooperation agendas.

Under each target we summarize the status in Sweden vis-à-vis the target: whether in the past decade or so trends in relevant indicators have been moving clearly away from the target (☹), clearly towards the target (☺), or where performance is indifferent or ambiguous (☺). Whether Sweden appears close to or far from achieving the target, and how far policies addressing the issue are already in place are visualized in the same way.

For each target we identify what we see as the key issues for Sweden. We then discuss what existing indicators and reports tell us about current trends in relation to aspects of the target that are relevant for Sweden's domestic agenda, and how far Sweden might be from achieving the target.

As discussed in Section 3.1, we encountered many challenges in interpreting these targets. The interpretations below are the outcomes of this analysis, after using our judgment on how best to address these challenges in each case. For summaries of the main challenges in interpreting each of the targets, see Table 1 in Section 3.

TARGET 1.2

By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions

Trends: ☹   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

The economic standard in Sweden is high, and has increased during the 21st century, but income gaps are widening. There is no agreed definition of absolute poverty in Sweden, but the minimum living cost (personal expenses) defined annually by the social security system (Social Insurance Agency 2014b) is often used. Relative poverty and widening income gaps are the main issues related to this target.

Achievement and trends

At 77%, Sweden has the highest share of population with "good economic standard" of all EU members (Statistics Sweden 2015f).[1] Fewer Swedes are at risk of poverty than the EU average. However, the gap between Sweden and the EU-27 average is closing. Less than 6% of the total population has benefited from direct financial support from the state since 2000,[2] yet relative poverty, measured as "the share of the population with income lower than 60% of median income" (see Target 10.1), increased from 7.3% in 1991 to 14.1 % in 2013 (Statistics Sweden 2015a). The elderly, unemployed and non-EU immigrants keep falling behind, and in 2013, 30.4% of people in this income bracket were in single-parent families and more than 40% of children of single mothers had low

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[1] Eurostat definition, based on a basket of 9 goods or services.
[2] National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen) online database: http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/statistik/statistikdatabas/ekonomisktbistand.

income (41.9%). Poverty among all children was 8.2% in 2010, compared to an OECD average of 13.3% (OECD Social Policy Division 2014).

Policies in place

The overall objective of Swedish economic policy is "to create as high a level of welfare as possible by contributing to: a high level of sustainable economic growth and employment (through structural policy); a welfare benefiting everyone (through distribution policy) and; a stable, high level of resource utilisation (through stabilisation policy)" (Government Offices of Sweden 2015). Social insurance is well integrated in the Swedish welfare system and essentially all people living in Sweden are covered (Social Insurance Agency 2012). Family benefits (e.g. child, parent, housing, health, subsidized pre-school), and the free education and subsidized health system are important means of evening out income disparities (see Target 10.1 on inequality).

TARGET 1.4

By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services including microfinance.

Trends: ☺   Achievement ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

Equal rights are granted under Swedish law, including the Constitution. However, the target also talks about equal access, which can be affected by, for example, informal discrimination or social and cultural norms, making it relevant to Sweden. Systems for property rights are comprehensive in Sweden, but the holding of assets is in practice unequally distributed.

Achievement and trends

While about 99% of both men and women in Sweden have bank accounts, actual ownership of assets is gender biased. For example, two-thirds of individually owned businesses were owned by men, and 62% of forest owners were men in 2011 (SIGI 2015). An overview of assets (including real estate, financial) suggests women hold a lower net fortune than men: 2,388 billion SEK compared to 3,132 billion SEK (Statistics Sweden 2010b). Importantly, only around half of the population hold real estate, which makes up 70% of these assets (Statistics Sweden 2013d). However, statistics for 1999-2007 show a 78% increase in women's holding of assets (financial and real estate), compared to 65% for men (Statistics Sweden 2010a). Women's debt is increasing at higher rates in parallel. High and increasing housing prices progressively exclude those with lower incomes who may not be granted credit, or cannot afford the required 15% deposit. Smaller loans (e.g. SMS loans) with excessive interest rates are easily accessible and poorly regulated.

Policies in place

The 2008 Discrimination Act promotes equal rights and opportunities irrespective of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or age (Diskrimineringslag 2008:567). The law covers discrimination through regulations, criteria or processes formulated in ways that discriminate against certain groups of people – and applies to many areas of society, including trading in goods, housing, services, public meetings, healthcare, social services insurance and public employment. Equally, the 1958 Swedish Inheritance Act is gender equal (Ärvdabalken 1958:637). Moreover, the Swedish Policy on Minorities and the 2009 Act on National Minorities and National Minority Languages (Lag om nationella minoriteter och minoritetsspråk 2009:724) grant rights to Sami, Swedish Finns, Tornedalers, Roma and Jews, and aims to address discrimination and

vulnerability, strengthen influence and participation, and the protect languages and cultural identities of minorities (Stockholm County Administrative Board 2012). Responses to address norms or practices that may reproduce unequal access or ownership despite legally granted rights are closely linked to issues highlighted in targets on poverty and gender inequality (see Targets 1.2, 5.4, 5.5). For example, one of the sub-goals of Sweden's Gender Equality Policy is on economic equality.

TARGET 2.3

By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment

Trends: ☹   Achievement: ☹   Policy: ☺

Issues

Sustainable agricultural practices are a vital source of income for 1.8% of the Swedish population (Statistics Sweden and Swedish Board of Agriculture 2014). The issues existing in Swedish agricultural practices in relation to this vague but broad target primarily relate to a shift from small-scale to large-scale farming and loss of profitability for small-scale farmers. It is also highly questionable whether smallholder productivity can be doubled in Sweden without serious negative impacts on other SDG targets, in particular relating to environmental protection and ecological resilience.

Achievement and trends

While the total value of Swedish agricultural production is increasing, smaller agricultural businesses have become less profitable. Between 2011 and 2012 the net result for small businesses (800–1599 ha.) decreased by 35%, speeding up the growing trend of farmers becoming more dependent on government support. There has been a clear structural shift away from small-scale and towards large-scale farming; only 36% of Swedish farms are classified as small and where the main source of income is not the farming activities (Statistics Sweden and Swedish Board of Agriculture 2014). Statistics also show that Sweden is by far a net importer of agricultural products: between 2012 and 2013 the value of imports was 70% higher than that of exports (Board of Agriculture 2014a). More work would be needed to analyze specific trends for the various population groups referred to in this target.

Policies in place

Agricultural practices are regulated by national law (Förordning om miljöhänsyn i jordbruket 1998:915); Lag om skötsel av jordbruksmark 1979:425)) and guided by an agricultural programme approved by the EU (Board of Agriculture 2014b). The programme, which is part of the EU 2020 Vision (European Commission 2010),covers, for example, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, supporting farmers and especially young farmers, as well as stimulating small-scale farms. It covers the period 2014-2020 (Board of Agriculture 2015; Government Offices 2014a).The programme also offers financial support to stimulate non-farm incomes (tourism, food processing, renewable energy generation, etc.). As the programme has only been in place for a year, there is no statistical evidence for whether it has broken the trend; however, it is being implemented and is steering financial support and other activities.

TARGET 3.4

By 2030, reduce by 1/3 premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

This target could be interpreted in Sweden as aiming to reduce deaths from the so-called welfare diseases, primarily cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes, as well as to reduce incidence of anxiety, depression and e.g. stress-related burnout.

Achievement and trend

The overall trend is positive for cardiovascular disease. For example, incidence of acute myocardial infarction (heart attack) has fallen by around 30% since the mid-1990s. Mortality from cancer is also (slightly) decreasing, although more cases are being diagnosed (Public Health Agency 2014). A negative trend is found in mental well-being, with the proportion of young people reporting anxiety, uncertainty and apprehensiveness tripled since the early 1990s. Due to the contrasting trends in different aspects of the target, it is difficult to make a general assessment of target achievement in Sweden. One aggregate measure of public health, "Overall mortality per 100,000 inhabitants" declined by around 20-25% in 1992-2012. The internationally used indicator for prevalence of various non-communicable diseases, "probability of dying between exact ages 30 and 70 from any of cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease [or suicide]", shows an almost flat line from 2000 to 2012 (stable at around 9% for males, 6% for females) (WHO 2014).

Policies in place

In 2012 Sweden adopted a national action plan on mental well-being, and in 2015 the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare was mandated to report on the most critical issues (National Board of Health and Welfare 2015). There are also overarching international action plans regarding mental health from the EU – the European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being (European Commission 2015a) – and the World Health Organization's Mental Health Action Plan (WHO 2013). Regarding other non-communicable illnesses, six out of seven risk factors for premature deaths are, in most cases, lifestyle-related (European Commission 2015b). The EU adopted an action plan in 2007 to promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles (European Commission 2015c), which has been translated into action plans and strategies through the Swedish Public Health Agency.

TARGET 3.9

By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water, and soil pollution and contamination

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

The target is straightforward in the issues it raises. For Sweden high levels of particulate matter are of primary concern.

Achievement and trends

It is difficult to find statistics definitively linking health outcomes with environmental pollutants (Statistics Sweden 2013c). A regularly monitored indicator is the level of certain toxic chemicals (PCB, dioxins, PBDEs, DDE) in breastmilk, and this has fallen significantly in Sweden (Environmental Protection Agency 2014b). Air quality is also regularly monitored in Sweden (Environmental

Protection Agency 2015a). Data show that Sweden has exceeded EU and national standards for particulate matter. Particulates have been estimated to cause 3,000-5,000 premature deaths per year in Sweden, which corresponds to shortening national life expectancy by 6-12 months (Environmental Protection Agency 2015b).

Policies in place
"Clean air" and "a non-toxic environment" are among Sweden's 16 national environmental quality objectives (see http://www.miljomal.se/Environmental-Objectives-Portal/) and, air quality and environmental pollution are regularly monitored. The latest review shows that Sweden will not meet the national objectives with only the current instruments (Environmental Protection Agency 2015d). To properly assess progress on this SDG target, more specific measurements and data are needed.

TARGET 4.4

By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☹   Policy: ☺

Issues
The main issues of concern in Sweden are declining scores in mathematics, problem solving, reading comprehension and natural science, and high levels of youth unemployment.

Achievement and trends
Sweden's disastrously declining scores in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have put the country below the OECD average in, for example, maths, problem solving, reading comprehension and natural science (OECD 2014c). The OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) suggests Sweden is above average on most aspects of adult skills (OECD 2013); but no historical data is available to discern a trend. However, it seems reasonable to assume that they will follow the decline in PISA scores, with a time lag. On vocational skills for employment, a possible measure is the successful establishment on the labour market of graduates of vocational education (KY) and higher vocational education (YH) programmes, which improved during the 2000s. However, this improvement correlates with fluctuations in the overall economy, making it hard to definitively link their employment with vocational training (National Agency for Higher Vocational Education 2015).

Policies in place
Problems in the education system and outcomes have gained significant political attention in Sweden. However, there is little political agreement on the best strategy to fix them, so there is a lack of new policies. Several public agencies are tasked to address this issue, including the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Training (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan), the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) and the Ministry of Education and Research (OECD 2015b; Government Offices 2014b).

TARGET 5.2

Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

The main issue in Sweden raised by this target is the threat to women's health and well-being posed by various forms of violence, including an increase in reported rapes and human trafficking cases, though it is unclear how far these reflect better reporting and stricter definitions and legislation.

Achievement and trends

Statistics on violence against women, and sexual violence in particular, suffer from heavy under-reporting (approximately 20% of all cases are believed to be reported). However, the reporting rate is thought to be improving. An estimated 10% of Swedish women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence as adults, while during childhood, the rate is 14% for physical violence and 25% for psychological violence (Public Health Agency 2014). The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande rådet) reported 27,065 cases of assault in 2014 and 2,934 cases of rape in 2013 against adult women (Statistics Sweden 2015c). Statistics show that rape cases have doubled in the past decade, but the increase can in part be explained by the improved reporting and more stringent legislation and definitions. The share of people who state in surveys that they have been subject to sexual crime has remained constant in the same period. Likewise, there is an increase in reported cases of trafficking of humans for sexual or other purposes (e.g. military, organ donors, forced labour) between 2008-2011, where girls and women are by far the highest share of victims. Actual cases and trends are, however, difficult to assess; interventions to combat human trafficking were accelerated in 2008, which has brought more cases to the surface (National Police Board 2012).

Policies in place

One of the sub-goals of the national gender equality policy states that: "Men's violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys, must have the same right and access to physical integrity" (Government Offices 2014c). Eliminating gender-based violence is a priority of the current government. A proposal for a new national strategy for eradicating male violence against women was presented in June 2015. It includes a review of previous interventions and concludes that progress has been made but gaps remain: lack of strategic steering, poor integration into existing work areas, lack of long-term interventions and financing, knowledge gaps, weak administration and implementation, lack of preventive measures and evaluation, and lack of prioritization by management in public agencies at local, regional and national levels (National Parliament 2015). As a cross-border phenomenon, preventing trafficking partly falls outside Swedish decision-making authority and renders assessment of policy efforts difficult at domestic level.

TARGET 5.4

Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

The main issue for Sweden's domestic agenda is gender inequalities in unpaid domestic work.

Achievement and trends

Despite Sweden being a frontrunner in terms of gender equality, Swedish women are still responsible for a larger share of unpaid domestic work (cooking, cleaning, child care) (Statistics Sweden 2015g); take a larger share of parental leave (Social Insurance Agency 2013); and more often work part time than men, with negative impacts on their careers, salaries, pensions and economic independence (Ministry of Finance 2015b).

Swedish men spend more time per day cooking, cleaning or caring for children than the OECD average (154 minutes), but it is still far less than an average Swedish women (207 minutes) (OECD 2015e). Trends are positive and gaps are slowly closing; for example, men's share of parental leave increased from 12.4% in 2000 to 24.8% in 2013 (Social Insurance Agency 2014a).

Policies in place

One of the sub-goals of the Swedish policy for gender equality is equal distribution of unpaid domestic work and provision of care, and states that "women and men must have the same responsibility for housework and have the opportunity to give and receive care on equal terms" (Government Offices 2014c). Separate taxation, paid parental leave and subsidized preschool are important existing instruments for enabling both women and men to combine work and family life.

TARGET 5.5

Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

Proposed indicators for assessing women's participation and leadership look primarily at representation in government, judiciary and company boards. Formal representation of women in the public sector, Parliament and government offices is good in Sweden but lags behind in the private sector. Further, opportunities for leadership and full and effective participation extend beyond holding seats; ensuring actual influence is an issue that would be relevant to Sweden.

Achievement and trends

In 2014, women constituted 44% of members of parliament (Statistics Sweden 2015e) and more than half of government ministers. The gender balance has also shifted in government offices from being almost exclusively male in the 1970s to a majority of posts now being held by women (Statistics Sweden 2015d). The government further reached, in 2003, its target of 40% women on the boards of state-owned companies. A majority of managers in the public sector are also female (66% in 2013). However, senior management positions still tend to be held by men, suggesting that opportunities for leadership are still unequal (Statistics Sweden 2013a). Academia lags behind the public sector, with 76% of professors male (Statistics Sweden 2013b). In the private sector, in 2013 less than 30% of members of company boards and management teams in Sweden were women (22% and 27% respectively, and yet an increase compared to 2002) and only 35% of private companies had any female representation on their boards (Statistics Sweden and Swedish Government Office 2013). Regarding political engagement, women and men participate equally in voting in parliamentary elections: 86% and 85% respectively in the 2014 elections (Statistics Sweden 2014b).

Policies in place

Sweden does not apply direct measures such as quotas to stimulate women's representation, but integrates a gender perspective into all policy areas. The overall objective of the Swedish gender

equality policy is that men and women shall have equal power to shape society and their lives. One of the sub-goals of this policy focuses on the equal division of power and influence and states that: "Women and men are to have the same rights and opportunities to be active citizens and to shape the conditions for decision-making" (Government Offices 2014c). The 2008 Discrimination Act (see Target 1.4, above) includes measures to prevent discrimination due to gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, age or sexual preferences, including in public employment.

TARGET 6.6

By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

Sweden is a water-abundant country with few constraints on water availability or access for human and ecosystem needs, and water quality is generally good, but its continuous protection is relevant. Wetlands are shrinking, with negative impacts on ecosystem services.

Trends and achievement

The national environmental quality objectives and EU directives guide protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems. The latest review of progress towards the environmental quality objectives by the Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket) shows various trends. Acidification of lakes and rivers is improving, and there is a possible slight improvement in eutrophication due to reduced leakage of phosphorus and nitrogen from agriculture (Environmental Protection Agency 2015e), but these need to be cut further to meet Sweden's existing national targets . This will depend on reduced emissions in other European countries.. Groundwater quality and levels are slowly improving at national level, but impacts are local and severity therefore difficult to assess. Wetlands are shrinking as a result of poor management, although the share of wetlands in the agricultural landscape is increasing with positive effects for flora, fauna and ecosystem services (Environmental Protection Agency 2012). Environmental considerations are an integral part of forest management in Sweden.

Policies in place

The Swedish environmental quality objectives include ambitious targets for zero eutrophication, flourishing lakes and streams, good quality groundwater, a balanced marine environment, thriving wetlands, and sustainable forests. Overall, policy measures exist but are not fully implemented. The 2012 review of the objectives (Environmental Protection Agency 2012) suggests that 14 of the 16 will not be reached with existing instruments. The 2014 OECD Environmental Performance Review for Sweden suggests there is scope to extend the use of economic instruments, e.g. wastewater pollution charges and taxes on pesticides and fertilizers, in order to improve water quality further (OECD Environment 2014). In 2011 a new Agency for Marine and Water Management (Havs och Vatten Myndigheten) was established with responsibility for planning on marine and freshwater resources, considering both ecosystem and human needs, with the ambition to better integrate marine and water policy.

TARGET 7.2

By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

Framed as an increase in the global energy mix, the target is vague with regards to ambition on national decarbonization efforts. Renewables represent a large share of Sweden's domestic energy mix, but Sweden could contribute through other means to further increase the share of renewables at global level. Diversification of energy supply and technological innovation are issues related to the target that would be relevant to Sweden.

Achievement and trends

Sweden is among the world leaders in renewable energy deployment, having the highest share of renewable energy of all EU countries (52% of used energy in 2013), and has already surpassed the EU 2020 target (Svenska kraftnät 2013). Hydropower accounts for 45% of the Swedish power production (supply) (Energy Agency 2013) and wind power is growing rapidly, with an increase from 0.2 TWh in 1997 to 11.5 TWh in 2014 – around 8% of total power production in Sweden (Swedish Wind Energy 2014). Sweden has also pioneered the integration of electricity markets with the Nordic countries, thus adding connections to neighbouring states, which enables and facilitates further expansion of renewable electricity (Stymne 2002).

Policies in place

An enabling national policy framework for the expansion of renewables has been in place since 2003 – the electricity certificate system. This is a tradable quota system that provides an economic incentive to invest in renewable electricity generation, and now also includes Norway. However, policy frameworks to promote small-scale decentralized solar and other renewable systems have been weaker than in many comparable jurisdictions (Steinhilber et al. 2011). Also, there is no political commitment to increase the share of renewables beyond the current national goals in order to achieve EU ambitions, which could lead to Sweden not meeting global ambitions (Svenska kraftnät 2013).

TARGET 8.4

Promote progressively, through 2030, global resources efficiency in consumption and production, and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead

Trends: ☹   Achievement: ☹   Policy: ☹

Issues

As the target relates to global resource efficiency the ambition at national level is unspecified. For a high-income country like Sweden, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions "embedded" in Swedish consumption and their associated environmental impacts are critical issues, but these are poorly accounted for at domestic level.

Achievement and trends

Based on four sets of resources (construction minerals, ores and industrial minerals, fossil fuels, and biomass), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)'s International Resource Panel in 2011 concluded that there has been an eight-fold increase in global resource use since 1900. However, per capita resource use has only doubled. The global economy has grown much faster than both these variables,

meaning there is a long-term trend of "spontaneous" decoupling (more efficient resource use, though no absolute reduction in the use of resources) (UNEP and International Resources Panel 2011).

Regarding decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation at the national level, there are many environmental variables to consider. There is also the question of scale. Environmental degradation *within* Sweden has in many ways been decoupled from economic growth; notably GHG emissions, which have decreased by 22% since 1990 (Environmental Protection Agency 2015f). However, total emissions "embedded" in goods and services consumed in Sweden have increased since the early 1990s, with an increasing proportion of them taking place abroad (Environmental Protection Agency 2015h). In this sense, there has been no absolute decoupling between Swedish growth and resource use/emissions. Looking at "domestic material consumption", an indicator for material resources used in an economy, Sweden has somewhat improved its resource efficiency since 2000 (Environmental Protection Agency 2015g). This indicator is sensitive to the amount of resources imported (and processed) and the extent to which they are sourced domestically.

Policies in place

The main policies related to GHG emissions and resource efficiency in Sweden are the Swedish Environmental Code and the Swedish environmental quality objectives (EEA and ETA/SCP 2011). The Generational Goal, the overarching goal of Sweden's environmental quality objectives, states that Sweden should solve its own environmental problems "without increasing environmental and health problems outside Sweden's borders" and that "patterns of consumption of goods and services cause the least possible problems for the environment and human health". Recognizing the limited practical and policy efforts to date to achieve this goal, a recent report has presented a wide range of possible options and policy instruments

TARGET 8.5

By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

Sweden is internationally considered a good place to work, praised for its gender equality and good working conditions. However, unemployment is rising, including among young people, and there is not yet equal pay for work of equal value between men and women although the gap is closing.

Achievement and trends

In late 2014 (quarter 3), Sweden had higher unemployment (at 7.9%) than the OECD average (7.3% in 2013), including high youth unemployment (23.6%), which is substantially above the OECD average (16.2% in 2013) (OECD 2015f). According to Eurostat, however, unemployment in Sweden is the second lowest in the EU, with 66.2% of the population aged 15-74 in the workforce (Confederation of Swedish Enterprise 2015). The rate of unemployment among people (age 16-64) self-identifying as having disabilities is 10%, hence higher than unemployment in the total population (Statistics Sweden 2015b). Regarding equality of pay, there was a gap between women's and men's pay of approximately 13.2% in 2014 (i.e. women earned 86.8% of men's earnings), representing the gap closed by 3.1 percentage points since 2005. Taking explanatory factors such as type of work, sector, education levels, age and working hours into account, an unexplained gap of 4.2 percentage points remains (National Mediation Office 2015).

Policies in place

The main legal framework for promoting equality in the Swedish labour market is the Discrimination Act (see Target 1.4), which calls for progressive action to counter discrimination throughout society, including in the workplace and in recruitment. Other mechanisms are also used, such as tax incentives to support the employment of people with disabilities. All workplaces are obliged to undertake a gender wage gap analysis (equal pay for work of equal value) every three years, and workplaces with 25 employees or more must have an action plan for equal wages (Discrimination Ombudsman 2015).

TARGET 9.5

Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capacities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending.

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

The key issue is a decline in private-sector research and development expenditure.

Achievement and trends

Research and development (R&D) spending in Sweden is dominated by the private sector (69%). Within the private sector it is concentrated in a few global corporations (Growth Analysis and Statistics Sweden 2015). R&D spending did increase as a share of GDP until 2001, peaking at 4.13%, mostly as a result of private-sector expansion, but has since then gradually declined; in 2013 it was down to 3.4% of GDP, the fifth highest level in the OECD (OECD 2015a). Publicly financed R&D is stable at around 0.9%, just over the OECD average of around 0.75%, and represents 30% of all R&D investment in Sweden. The number of R&D workers per million people has been relatively stable, according to World Bank data.[3] University R&D staff increased from 15,700 in 2005 to 19,100 in 2013 (there are no official statistics on R&D staff in private companies). A 2012 survey by the journal *Ny Teknik* revealed that the total number of R&D staff employed by the 30 companies with the largest R&D departments (42,000 people) had increased by 5% since 2009 However, in the last seven years, several large companies have reduced their R&D staff in Sweden (*Ny Teknik* 2012). Sweden ranks consistently very high on EU's Innovation Union Scoreboard (European Commission 2014) as well as the Global Innovation Index (Cornell University et al. 2014) .

Policies in place

Sweden has a designated public agency for innovation, VINNOVA, which maintains and institutionalizes the policy cycle for the government "R&D bill" (Vinnova 2015). Sweden also offers tax incentives and other instruments to foster innovation in indirect ways.

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[3] http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.SCIE.RD.P6

TARGET 10.1

By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average

Trends: ☹   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

This target is arguably the most relevant poverty-reduction SDG target for high-income countries, as well as a critical one for social sustainability. In Sweden, income gaps are widening.

Trends and achievement

Sweden is one of the most equal countries in the world (Gini coefficient 0.27; Palma ratio 0.958[4]) (OECD 2015d), but trends suggest gaps are widening rather than closing. The share of the population with less than 60% of median income is increasing. Sweden experienced the largest growth in inequality among OECD countries between 1985 and 2010, although the change was not dramatic (OECD 2015d). Moreover, since the mid-1990s the incomes of those with less than 60% of median income have risen more slowly than those above this level (Ministry of Finance 2015a). While wages, taxes and transfers in part explain changes in income distribution, the key factor in the widening gap in Sweden since the 1980s is higher disparity in capital gains (Centre for Business and Policy Studies 2011).

Policies in place

The OECD suggests that income taxes and cash benefits reduce inequality by 28% among the working age population in Sweden (OECD 2015c), and the Swedish government says that welfare services reduce income difference by 20%, as they benefit children, youth and elderly (Ministry of Finance 2015a). The redistributive effect was, however, reduced in the period 1995-2013, due to tax reforms. Recent reforms have decreased the tax burden generally, but sometimes favoured the wealthiest (OECD 2015c). For example, wealth tax (*förmögenhetsskatt),* which was primarily paid by the 10% of the population with the largest incomes, was abolished in 2007 and property tax rates have been cut. However, the current government proposed more redistributive reforms in its spring 2015 budget, strengthening unemployment insurance, increasing maintenance support, increasing sickness and activity benefit, and increasing housing allowance for the retired (Ministry of Finance 2015a). These changes would primarily benefit those with lowest incomes and strengthen economic equality between women and men (Ministry of Finance 2015a).

TARGET 10.2

By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status

Trends: ☹   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

This target is multidimensional, covering all types of discrimination, making it challenging to interpret in a quick review process such as this. Several dimensions have further been addressed in other targets (1.2, 1.4 10.1, 5.5) and we focus here on lack of inclusion of immigrants, which is a prominent issue in

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[4] The Palma ratio measures the ratio between the income share of the top 10% to that of the bottom 40%. The Gini coefficient measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or consumption expenditure) among individuals/households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution.

public debate. While Sweden is a comparatively inclusive society with strong policies on, for example, discrimination and gender equality, social (housing), political (representation) and economic (unemployment) segregation of immigrants is an issue.

Achievement and trends

The OECD suggested in a 2011 report that Sweden had the largest disparity in employment between foreign-born and native-born residents of any OECD member. Only 58% of foreign-born residents aged 20-64 were employed in 2012, compared with 82% of native Swedes. Although there was no significant gender gap in employment rates among foreign-born residents, but age at the point of immigration, education levels and reason for migrating all influence employment rates (Statistics Sweden 2014a). Non-EU immigrants are falling behind economically (OECD Social Policy Division 2014). Political representation of foreign-born residents is still low: only 8.3% of MPs were born outside Sweden, although this group represents 16% of the population (Fores 2014).

Policies in place

Integration policy is now being integrated with employment, education and welfare policy in Sweden, with a major emphasis on employment. An interministerial working group has been established on reception of asylum-seekers and how to introduce them into the labour market. Policy packages to speed up establishment on the labour market and in society at large are being developed and new investments include fast tracks for employment, additional resources to the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen), validation of foreign qualifications (e.g. of doctors and nurses), language courses, education and training at accommodation facilities for newly arrived immigrants, increased financial resources for municipalities to accommodate immigrants, new legislation for equal integration in the Swedish school system, and increased support to civil society programmes (Löfven et al. 2015).

TARGET 11.2

By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

The main issues for Sweden are infrastructure challenges for the Swedish national rail network, increasing fares for public transport and congested public transport systems in Stockholm.

Achievement and trends

Public transport journeys have increased in Sweden since 2000, both in absolute terms (32%) and per capita (20%). The extent of public transport provision (in km) has also increased by around 20% (Transport Analysis 2014). A negative, from an accessibility point of view, is rising fares, which have risen faster than the prices of other goods and services (Transport Analysis 2015b). The national rail network has come under great pressure over the last five years due to rapid growth in use, combined with a long-term lack of maintenance. This has resulted in increased congestion, severe delays and failure in operations. In their latest review, Transport Analysis concluded that the majority of indicators are not moving towards in a positive direction, and that the network is still highly dependent on fossil fuels. The review judges that transport provision is still not sustainable (Transport Analysis 2015b, p.8). The National Audit Office found that public investment in transport infrastructure rose over the

period 1997–2011, in particular for railways, but little of the investment was in refurbishment (National Audit Office 2012).

Policies in place

Sweden's transport policy objectives were adopted by the Parliament in 2009 (Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications 2009). Two major groups of goals address equality in access, infrastructure quality, and supply of public transport (Funktionsmålet), and safety, health and environment (Hänsynsmålet) (Transport Analysis 2015a). The policy framework from 2009 is well aligned with the intentions of SDG Target 11.2.

TARGET 12.3

By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☹   Policy: ☺

Issues

The target addresses global food waste and reduction along production and supply chains. Food wastage from (especially) households is particularly relevant domestically in Sweden.

Achievement and trends

In Sweden, food waste increased from 117 kg per capita in 2010 to 127 kg per capita in 2012. The largest part came in 2012 from households (81 kg), followed by industry (18 kg), restaurants (15 kg), grocery stores (7 kg) and canteens (6 kg) (Environmental Protection Agency 2013b). However, this data is sensitive to the methodologies used, which have changed recently. Generally, there is a lack of reliable data on food waste at European and international levels, but estimates of European averages suggest Sweden is not among the best performers (FAO 2011). Carbon emissions from the production of all the food wasted in Sweden (1.2 million tonnes in 2012) corresponds to around 2 million tonnes of CO_2, which is around 3% of Sweden's total emissions. A significant part of food waste (e.g. 35% of household food waste) has been classified as "unnecessary", since it could have been used for various productive purposes (Environmental Protection Agency 2013b).

Policies in place

The government has adopted a policy goal that, by 2018, at least 50% of food waste from households, canteens, grocery stores, and restaurants should be sorted and biologically treated for recovery of nutrients, and at least 40% subject to energy recovery. Food waste is currently being collected in around 170 municipalities for production of biogas.

TARGET 12.5

By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling, and reuse

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

Sweden is seeing an increase in municipal waste volumes, and reuse and waste-prevention actions are gaining little traction.

Achievement and trends

Since the 1970s, Sweden has transitioned from a waste management system relying mainly on landfill to one characterized by resource recovery (energy, materials recycling, nutrients and organic matter). In 2013, Sweden generated 4.4 million tonnes of municipal waste, of which only 0.7% went to landfill (Swedish Waste Management 2014). The majority (50.3%) of household waste is incinerated for energy (only the second level, above disposal, in the European waste hierarchy[5]). Significant progress has also been made with nutrient and organic matter recovery (e.g. composting of household waste). However, prevention and preparation for reuse, the top levels of the waste hierarchy, have seen less progress, and municipal waste volumes have increased 30% over the last 10 years (Swedish Waste Management 2015), reaching 461 kg per capita in 2013.

Policies in place

The environmental quality objectives include a target that at least 60% of waste should be prepared for reuse or materials recycled (Environmental Protection Agency 2013a). There are, however, no coercive policy instruments in place, such as quotas or a weight-based waste management fee system. The trade association Swedish Waste Management (Avfall Sverige) reports that municipalities are increasingly facilitating materials recycling by cooperating with other actors, such as secondhand clothes shops, and engaging in awareness-raising and education activities (Swedish Waste Management 2014). Other initiatives include awareness-raising websites.

TARGET 13.3

Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

This target is vague in terms of the expected progress and outcome. Trends in human and institutional capacity are further difficult to measure. The Swedish government aims to enhance knowledge on the impacts of a changing climate (Swedish Government Office 2015).

Trends and achievement

Education for sustainable development was formally introduced into the Swedish education system in 2004. According to the National Agency for Education (Skolverket), learning for sustainable development is characterized by democratic work processes, critical thinking, interdisciplinary collaboration, diversity in pedagogical methods, participation and influence (National Agency for Education 2011). Earlier assessments on sustainability education suggested challenges in integrating social, economic and ecological aspects in the overall education programme, although environmental education, often focused on concrete actions such as handling waste, was increasing (Committee for Sustainable Development Education 2004). The preschool and primary school curriculums include overarching guidelines and goals (primarily in geography classes) to build knowledge on conditions for a healthy environment and sustainable development, and the impact of lifestyles on health, environment and society in large.

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[5] The 5-level waste hierarchy is described in article 4 of the 2008 European Directive on Waste. In descending order the levels are prevention; preparing for reuse; recycling; other recovery, e.g. energy recovery; and disposal.

Climate change awareness-raising campaigns have been carried out in conjunction with major climate meetings, including a government campaign in 2009 ("2grader.se") and the Swedish branch of the "Act Now for Climate Justice" initiative currently run by the Church of Sweden and Diakonia. The Swedish Association for Nature Conservation (Naturskyddsföreningen) also carries out awareness-raising campaigns and the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI) generates and disseminates knowledge on climate change. The Swedish Forest Agency (Skogssverket) has recently organized capacity-building programmes for foresters, suggesting that awareness of climate change and willingness to adapt is growing among this group (Swedish Forest Agency 2014a).

According to the pollsters SOM Institute, while reports and media coverage suggest increasing levels of anxiety about climate change among Swedes (e.g. Kihlberg 2015; Wirtén et al. 2013), their own surveys found little change between 2001-2012 except for peaks around the time of major climate-change reports or summits (Oscarsson and Bergström 2013)

Policies in place

The government states that climate research is critical to its environmental and climate policies and that it wishes to enhance knowledge on future climate change and its impacts. The current government includes a Minister for Climate and the Environment, and the government budget 2015 includes budget lines for climate adaptation and for climate investments at municipal level. The government has established a national knowledge hub at SMHI that collects knowledge on climate adaptation and brings together various government agencies and county administrative boards. Also, the new Future Agency (Framtidsverket) under the Prime Minister's Office is tasked with enhancing knowledge about the biggest future challenges, such as sustainable development and climate change (Swedish Government Offices 2015).

TARGET 14.1

By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

The Baltic Sea and many of Sweden's coastal and marine areas are affected by eutrophication, overfishing and pollution (OECD Environment 2014). The marine environment of the Baltic is important to several economic sectors in Sweden, including shipping, tourism and fishing.

Achievement and trends

Emissions of phosphorus and nitrogen from agriculture, industry and wastewater treatment plants have fallen over the past years, but overall levels in the sea are not decreasing. Phosphorus and nitrogen captured in soils, groundwater and lake sediment continue to reach the Swedish coast, and levels in the sea depend largely on rainfall and water flows (Environmental Protection Agency 2014a). Nutrient emissions from maritime transport and ports are expected to increase up to 2020 and then even out, while nutrient emissions from tourism are expected to continuously increase beyond 2050. Nutrients from industry and sewage are expected to decrease, as more stringent policy have been introduced (OECD Environment 2014).

Marine debris – primarily plastic, packaging, oil drums and fishing equipment – is not monitored in a uniform way across Sweden and data is scarce. The Bohuslän coast on the North Sea is the worst affected by marine debris, due to prevailing currents. Although most existing data only covers debris washed up on beaches, debris in the sea can be expected to follow a similar trend. The total volume of

marine debris in the province of Bohuslän fell during the period 1992-2006, but a number of municipalities in the region report an increase more recently (Agency for Marine and Water Management 2012).

Policies in place

Sweden has been actively engaged in international initiatives (e.g. through the EU, the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission and the OSPAR Commission) promoting an ecosystems approach to the protection of marine ecosystems, but is still in the early stages of implementing such an approach in its own marine policy (OECD Environment 2014). The institutional framework was strengthened with the establishment of the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwAM) in 2011 and the transposition of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive into Swedish legislation in 2010. Five of the Swedish environmental quality objectives are relevant to marine ecosystem services ("a balanced marine environment", "flourishing coastal areas", "a non-toxic environment", "zero eutrophication", and "rich diversity of plant and animal life"), but none of these are expected to be reached with existing policy measures (Environmental Protection Agency 2012). A report from SwAM also suggested that policy instruments in this area were not sufficient (Agency for Marine and Water Management 2012). Sweden has extended its marine protected areas, but according to the OECD ,it is not on track to reach the Aichi Biodiversity Target[6] of 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020 (OECD Environment 2014).

TARGET 15.2

By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

The main issue for Sweden's domestic agenda is the protection or regeneration of forest biodiversity. Related issues are formal and voluntarily protection of productive forest, alternative forestry methods that avoid clear cutting, amount of dead wood and broad-leaved trees.

Achievement and trends

The use of clear cutting in management of productive forest has risen sharply in recent decades, from less than 13.5% by area in 1955 to 80% today (Royal Board of Private Forestry 1957; Environmental Protection Agency and Statistics Sweden 2014). However, total forest area in Sweden has remained roughly constant over this period due to regular replanting. Today, productive and unproductive forests cover around 70% of Sweden´s land area (Swedish Forest Agency 2014b) and around 7.7% of all forests are protected [7]. The total area of protected forest has grown in recent years by around 0.1% of the total area of productive forest land[8]. This trend is partially due to policy efforts to achieve "Sustainable forests", one of Sweden´s environmental quality objectives. Policies to support the "Sustainable forests" objectives have also aimed to promote more sustainable forestry methods.

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[6] A target under the Convention on Biological Diveristy Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (https://www.cbd.int/sp/default.shtml).
[7] http://www.scb.se/Statistik/MI/MI0603/2014A01/MI0603_2014A01_SM_MI41SM1501.pdf.
[8] See footnote 4

However, a recent review by the Swedish EPA suggests that the target for sustainable forestry will not reached with existing policy mechanisms.

Policies in place

Sweden has multiple legal frameworks related to forest management (Swedish Forest Agency 2015), among them the Environmental Code (*Miljöbalk*), which is the main framework for forest conservation. Forest management is one of the few areas that are not regulated in the EU, but guidelines on national management of forests have been provided through the EU Forest Strategy, which is a part of the Europe 2020 vision (European Commission 2013). While the sustainable forest objective will not be met with current policies, positive trends can be seen (Environmental Protection Agency 2015c). For example, forest corporations are creating procedures and guidelines for sustainable use of their own forests, and county administrative boards are working together with the Swedish Forest Agency (Skogstyrelsen), which is responsible for implementing political decisions on forests, on establishing procedures for sustainable forest management in an attempt to establish more coherent policies (Environmental Protection Agency 2014c).

TARGET 16.4

By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen recovery and return of stolen assets, and combat all forms of organized crime

Trends: ☺   Achievement: ☺   Policy: ☺

Issues

Illicit financial flows is a complex area with many component problems and regulatory responses, hence it is very difficult to summarize and measure progress in a single or aggregated indicator. Increasing organized crime is relevant to this target.

Achievement and trends

An OECD report from 2014 on illicit financial flows and OECD country responses suggests that Sweden has room for improvement in several areas, on a range of indicators and performance measures (OECD 2014a). According to a report by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, organized crime has grown over the last few decades; however, statistics in this field are hard to come by (Säkerhetspolitik 2013). Looking at reported offences, some linked to organized crime have increased over the past decade, such as stolen goods, smuggling (including drug trafficking), and procuring and trafficking for sexual purposes (National Council for Crime Prevention 2015).

Policies in place

Sweden has launched several initiatives to combat organized crime, including better coordination of regional and national police interventions (National Council for Crime Prevention 2011).

TARGET 17.2

Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7% of ODA/GNI to developing countries and 0.15 to .20% of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20% of ODA/GNI to least developed countries

Trends: ☺　　　　　Achievement: ☺　　　　　Policy: ☺

Issues

Sweden has a long tradition of generous international development cooperation and aid, much of which is chanelled through multilateral organizations

Achievement and trends

There is a long tradition of ambitious Swedish development cooperation and aid. Sweden has performed strongly on its ODA commitments, and at 1.0% its national target is already higher than the 0.7% here. The Swedish aid budget has more than doubled since 2000 and is now 38.4 billion SEK (11 SEK capita). Only Norway and Luxemburg give more aid per capita. In 2013, Sweden exceeded its own ODA target, allocating 1.01% of GNI, compared with an OECD Development Assistance Committee average of 0.30% (OECD 2014b). Sweden also exceeds the SDG target on ODA to least-developed countries, allocating 29.3% of its 2013 ODA to LDCs, which corresponds to around 0.23% of GNI.

Policies in place

Policy goals for Sweden's international aid is to "create opportunities for better living standards for people living in poverty and oppression". The ambitious goal of 1% of GNI was supported by seven of the eight political parties represented in Parliament.

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