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SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION AGENCY

# PARTNERSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Swedish Environmental  
Protection Agency





# A common environment is a shared responsibility

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Swedish EPA) was established in 1967 and is thus the world's oldest environmental authority. Our mission is to work for a better environment and sustainable development, in Sweden and around the world. Our experience is that good environmental governance supports economic development.

Nationally, the Swedish EPA is responsible for implementing environmental policy in areas such as nature conservation, climate change, management of hazardous substances, products and waste. We coordinate the evaluation of progress towards the environmental quality objectives set by Parliament. At the Government's request, we undertake studies on a range of issues and provide basic data and analysis for policy decisions.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION IN SWEDEN** is based to a large extent on decisions at EU level, but also on active cooperation in international organisations. Our staff participate in over 150 different groups within the EU and around 130 under the auspices of international organisations and environmental conventions.

Global environmental cooperation is important to Sweden, and since the early 1990s the Swedish EPA has been involved in various forms of development cooperation. Our special area of expertise is capacity development for more effective environmental governance, based on legislation and other policy instruments. We seek to create better conditions for effective environmental governance by strengthening the capacity of organisations and institutions, of legislation and other systems in society, and of individuals. We cooperate bilaterally with environmental agencies in some ten countries and with UN bodies such as UNEP, UNDP and the UNECE.

Resources to engage in cooperation, bilateral and multilateral, come from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The Swedish EPA is also involved in cooperation with Russia funded by the Swedish Ministry of the Environment.

**Commitment to a future built on both knowledge and cooperation is the driving force we need to move towards sustainable development.**



# International cooperation is fundamental

Emissions to air, land, seas, lakes and rivers in one country affect the environment in others. The same is true of overexploitation of natural resources, degradation of soil, deforestation, and poor management of waste. When other countries reduce their emissions, Sweden's environment also improves – just as our emissions affect others. If we want to improve the global environment, therefore, we need to work together internationally.

**THROUGH ITS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**, the Swedish EPA is playing a part in achieving both global and Swedish environmental objectives. Other aims are to follow up international conventions and agreements, and to promote greater cooperation on global environmental problems. In addition, we share our knowledge with countries preparing for EU membership.

The projects we support may, for example, be concerned with protecting the ozone layer, curbing the spread of hazardous chemicals, reducing pollution of air and soil, and promoting sustainable management of waste. We are also seeking to tackle climate change.



**SOME COUNTRIES** are currently experiencing rapid industrialisation and very strong growth. Only in recent years have understanding of and concern for the environment gained greater prominence there. In most developing nations, poverty is widespread. Other issues have often been seen as more important than long-term stewardship of the environment. At the same time, we know that the poorest are also most at risk in the face of poor air quality, polluted water and degraded natural resources.

Sweden has been pursuing an active development policy for many years. Parliament has decided that 1 per cent of our GNI is to be spent on aid. The framework and substance of the country's development cooperation are determined by Parliament and the Government.

Swedish development cooperation policy is guided by the conviction that improved living conditions for the poorest will help to secure a better world for us all. Environment and climate have been identified as one of three focus areas.

## COURSES IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

The Swedish EPA has arranged courses for environmental experts from other countries. The first two were five-week courses in environmental governance and management, attended by a total of 50 participants from Laos, Cambodia, China, Thailand and Vietnam. We are also working on a corresponding course for colleagues and other interested parties from the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, with a greater emphasis on how EU approximation can be used as a driving force in developing environmental policy.

**An important aim** of our courses is to build professional networks in the regions in question. They support improvements in environmental protection

by enhancing the knowledge and skills of those responsible for environmental issues within the authorities of the countries concerned.

**The courses** are offered as part of Sida's International Training Programme (ITP), which is aimed at individuals from both low- and middle-income countries. The methodology employed is based on participants' own knowledge and needs. Individuals who have attended an ITP course should be able to drive reform in their own organisations and contribute to their countries' development.

Each course begins with four weeks of training in Sweden, followed by a week-long session in the region itself. The programme combines lectures,

workshops, study visits and individual project work, and is structured around the following areas:

- Environmental challenges today
- Environmental policy
- Good democratic governance
- Legislation
- Economic instruments
- Voluntary instruments
- Sustainable urban development
- Project management

Beforehand, participants are asked to bring with them an idea for an individual project, which they develop during the course. One aim of this part of the programme is to translate the knowledge gained into a tangible improvement project.

**The rapid economic development and industrialisation which many countries have achieved in recent years create a need for strong environmental legislation and administrations with the capacity to implement it.**



# Your plans and our experience

Environmental governance has developed rapidly in the last few decades. Many states in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America have recently begun to establish environmental administrations. More effective environmental legislation, stronger environmental institutions and a clearer division of responsibilities are often among our partner countries' goals. In our view, a greater understanding is needed of how environmental issues interact with other aspects of development. It is also important to ensure that citizens are better informed about the environment and have greater access to and opportunities to influence the decisions reached.

**THE STARTING POINT** for our cooperation is countries' own needs, based on their own plans. In an initial phase, we need to understand the circumstances and resources of our partners, before together analysing what we want to achieve. Our strategy is based on the following goals:

- Cooperation should promote effective environmental governance in partner countries.
- It should be mutually beneficial and linked to the Swedish EPA's national and other international work.
- It should have a focus corresponding to the Swedish EPA's particular expertise and resources.

The principal areas in which we cooperate are:

- Climate and air quality.
- Waste, pollution and chemicals.
- Nature conservation and the value of biodiversity.

The contribution we make is based on our experience as a national agency. It may for example be a matter of developing legislation and other policy instruments – economic, administrative, market-based and voluntary. The latter include communicating with the public and working with the business sector and other key stakeholders. Sweden's system of environmental objectives is often of interest to our partners, as is our knowledge of environmental monitoring and supervision.

**SWEDEN WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY** in the world with an integrated approach to the issuing of permits for environmentally damaging industrial and other plants. Impacts on air, water and land are considered together and economic factors are also taken into account. Our experience of working with regional and local authorities, and with representatives of both business and non-governmental environmental organisations, is also relevant. Another important area is supporting countries in their efforts to comply with international agreements.

Generally, the Swedish EPA's own experts act as project managers for our cooperation projects. Experts from other government agencies, county administrative boards and local authorities, as well as consultants, may also play a part. However, responsibility for projects and for achieving results always rests, on the Swedish side, with the EPA.

## CUTTING DIOXIN EMISSIONS IN CHINA .....

Sweden has a long tradition of requiring industries to use the best available techniques, in order to reduce their impacts on the environment. This involves an integrated assessment of how air, water and land are affected, as well as an economic appraisal based on an holistic approach.

**Together** with the Ministry of Environmental Protection of China, the Swedish EPA is carrying out a project to reduce emissions of dioxins from the pulp and paper industry. The water pollution arising from this industry damages both ecosystems and human health.

China has one of the world's fastest-growing pulp and paper markets. The country consumes around 15 per cent of the world's total output of paper, and is home to some 3,600 pulp and paper mills. They represent one of the most polluting industries in China, with major emissions that leave the waters affected depleted of oxygen. Use of chlorine to bleach the pulp gives rise to dioxins, organic compounds that are both toxic and persistent.

**There is a strong will** in China to tackle these problems. The purpose of the project is to strengthen the Chinese Environment Ministry's efforts to manage and reduce dioxin emissions from the pulp and paper industry. The aim is to enable the industry to meet the requirements of the Stockholm Convention, an international agreement to control and curb emissions of hazardous substances.

China has signed the Convention, which means that pulp and paper mills established after 2005 are required to employ technology that avoids emissions of dioxins. Primarily, it is a matter of using bleaching agents other than chlorine.

**We are supporting** the Environment Ministry's efforts to develop methods to regulate the industry's emissions. One concern of the project is to systematise legislation, including regulations and standards. The approaches employed are Best Available Techniques (BAT) and Best Environmental Practices (BEP).

**The Mekong River is a vital artery of several countries and an important resource for millions of people. Reducing impacts on the environment is key to continued sustainable development.**



## Our partners are colleagues in other countries

Our experts cooperate directly with their opposite numbers at environment ministries or agencies in other countries. We also work with regional authorities and organisations, and with some international organisations.

In the 1990s, our development cooperation was focused on our ‘near abroad’, in particular the Baltic Sea states. A key concern here was to support the countries’

adaptation to EU legislation, in advance of membership. Our own experience of preparations for accession and subsequently as an EU member is an asset in such cooperation.

**SINCE THE 2000s**, the scope of our cooperation has been extended to include both more areas and more countries. Currently, we are engaged in some thirty projects in Asia, the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. The intention is to develop long-term cooperation with our partners in different countries.



The Swedish EPA also arranges international courses for environmental officials from different regions in Asia and Europe. In addition, we participate in projects run by UN organisations such as UNEP, UNDP and the UNECE and by many other international bodies.

**THE INITIATIVE FOR COOPERATION** may come from a country’s environment ministry or agency. Cooperation is only possible if the potential partner country has a political will to lead and assume responsibility for its own development. It is also up to that country to ensure that there are resources to carry out the projects envisaged, with support from the Swedish EPA.

The range of countries and areas of cooperation chosen is guided largely by Sweden’s development cooperation policy, environmental policy and policy for global development. In our international cooperation we follow Sida’s project planning methods, which include results-based management, as well as international agreements, among them the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. These documents stress the need for donor coordination to deliver effective aid, as well as the partner country’s ownership of and responsibility to manage its development.

Cooperation within and between countries in Europe, with a focus on the environment, builds on mutual benefit and responsibility.



## MACEDONIA'S MOVE TOWARDS EU MEMBERSHIP .....

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a candidate for EU membership. As it prepares for accession, the country has a great deal to do in terms of adapting its legislation and regulations to those in force in the EU and implementing the latter in an effective manner.

**Joining the EU** has far-reaching implications for a country's policies and administration. The environment is one of the EU's most demanding policy areas, with at least 200 pieces of common legislation.

The Swedish EPA is working with Macedonia's Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning to prepare its officials for the accession negotiations

and future membership. Another important target group is an Environmental Working Group, made up of representatives of several ministries within the Government of Macedonia.

**In a member state**, national efforts to safeguard the environment are based largely on decisions developed within the EU. As a member, therefore, it is important to be familiar with the EU's various institutions and the procedures at work within and between them. It is no less important to create an effective national structure to coordinate and influence environmental activities within the EU. Our project also aims to develop relations between the Macedonian Environment Ministry and the country's

environment movement and other non-government stakeholders.

The Swedish EPA has previously provided similar know-how to candidate countries such as Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland, which are all now EU members. Within the project, relatively new member states, like Slovenia and Lithuania, are also contributing their experience.

**A review of the first phase** of this cooperation shows that, in the environmental sphere, Macedonia has now improved its capacity to participate in the forthcoming membership negotiations and the EU's legislative process, and to meet EU requirements in the field of nature conservation.



## KEEPING TABS ON AIR QUALITY IN RUSSIA, UKRAINE AND BELARUS

Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, like Sweden, are parties to the UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP), which came into force in 1983 and now covers a wide range of substances. Active involvement by these countries in regional cooperation on air quality is necessary in reducing emissions of air pollutants with adverse effects on the environment and human health.

CLRTAP's aim is to curb emissions of air pollutants that undergo long-range transport. It is a regional agreement, encompassing Europe, the United States, Canada and the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Most signatories have made commitments to reduce their emissions of various pollutants, including sulphur and nitrogen oxides, ammonia, volatile organic compounds, persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals.

**Scientists have demonstrated** links between sulphur emissions in Western and Central Europe and acidification of lakes in Scandinavia. It has long been known that winds can carry air pollutants considerable distances, up to thousands of kilometres. International cooperation to reduce emissions is therefore essential.

From the outset, CLRTAP has held a prominent place in Sweden's international environmental cooperation. The present close collaboration on the Convention between the Swedish EPA and countries in our near abroad began with Russia, and was subsequently extended to include Belarus and Ukraine.

**Projects include courses** and workshops, but also measures to strengthen the countries' capacity to participate actively in negotiations under the Convention. That includes translating national emission data to a format adapted to an integrated assessment model, as a basis for commitments during the negotiations. A key aspect of our work involves bringing together and using the expertise already available in partner countries, and supporting their efforts under the Convention.

Improved knowledge and capacity within the partner countries' environmental agencies will provide a better basis for decision making and hence for tackling atmospheric emissions.



A GOOD LIVING ENVIRONMENT FOR HUMANS AND ALL OTHER LIVING THINGS,  
NOW AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. The Swedish EPA's vision



The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency is a central environmental agency. We help to ensure that environmental policy is implemented effectively and to a high standard, and that it develops in an appropriate manner. We also monitor environmental action, nationally and internationally. The Agency employs some 500 people, representing a wide range of professional skills – engineers, lawyers, economists, information officers, social scientists and others.





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