

EU priorities to achieve the Swedish environmental quality objectives





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Background

The Government communication “EU priorities to achieve the Swedish environmental quality objectives” (2003/04:9) is based on the fifteen environmental quality objectives and related interim targets adopted by the Swedish Riksdag in 1999. The Government feels there is reason to review the priorities adopted by the Riksdag for environmental work in the EU based on these objectives.

On 21 February 2002, the Government commissioned the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Swedish EPA) to pinpoint the issues Sweden should concentrate on in particular and try to influence in the EU. This assignment was to be carried out in consultation with other relevant authorities and the Agency submitted its report on 8 October 2002. A Government communication on EU priorities was presented to the Riksdag in October 2003.

The Government feels that EU work is important if Sweden is to be able to achieve its environmental quality objectives.

The communication on EU priorities contains four main sections:

- ★ The basis of Swedish EU work, including the environmental quality objectives from an EU perspective, general prerequisites for European environmental work, sustainable development, EU enlargement and Swedish experiences of work in the EU.
- ★ The priority areas
- ★ Swedish environmental quality objectives and EU work. The communication analyses the 15 environmental quality objectives and the EU issues that play an important part in their achievement.
- ★ Tools for implementing the priorities.

The basis of Swedish EU work

To be proactive, Sweden needs to prioritise certain efforts on the European level. Experiences from eight years of membership and not least from the Swedish EU Presidency in 2001 illustrate the importance of taking early, goal-oriented action. Work within the Union is in a state of constant change. Working methods are being developed, partly as a result of the Union's imminent enlargement, the largest in its history, and partly because goal-oriented action is becoming increasingly more important.

To achieve the 15 national environmental quality objectives, measures need to be implemented on different levels: nationally, regionally and locally. In many cases, decisions or initiatives are also needed at the EU level to achieve the desired effect. There may be a variety of reasons why common European action is required.

- ★ Environmental problems are transboundary in nature and solutions can only be achieved through common action. This is true of problems such as acidifying and eutrophying air pollution, discharges into the marine environment and transboundary watercourses and the protection of migratory birds.
- ★ The way the internal market works basically means that environmental requirements on products are harmonised across the EU.
- ★ In international processes, such as the climate negotiations, the EU is stronger if it acts as one rather than each member state acting alone.

By actively pursuing environmental issues in the EU and when the regulations are the same in all member states, Sweden will not only improve the environment at home but also in the entire union, including the new accession countries.

The communication is based on an analysis using the Swedish environmental quality objectives as its starting-point. These objectives cannot totally govern Sweden's EU priorities in the environmental field, however, and the country must also consider how EU environ-

ment policy as a whole is developing – the Sixth European Environmental Action Programme (6EAP) being a case in point.

6EAP was one of the top-priority environmental issues during the Swedish EU Presidency. The programme establishes guidelines for EU environment policy until 2012. It will help to integrate environmental concern into all policy areas and is the basis of the ecological dimension of the EU sustainable development strategy.

The programme specifies four priority areas:

- ★ the climate
- ★ nature and biodiversity
- ★ the environment, health and quality of life
- ★ natural resources and waste.

Priority areas

Sustainable development is an overarching aim of government policy. Sweden has made concerted efforts within the EU to put environmental issues as high up on the agenda as economic and social development. Among the success stories is the EU strategy for sustainable development adopted during the Swedish Presidency in 2001. Another is the Cardiff Process, which involves the incorporation of environmental issues into the Union's various policy areas.

The Government is therefore continuing to allocate high priority to the EU strategy for sustainable development and to the Cardiff Process, and highlights them as key factors if the Swedish environmental quality objectives are to be achieved. The Government has also elected to prioritise efforts in the following areas:

THE CLIMATE AND AIR POLLUTION

As far as the climate is concerned, it is unimportant where on Earth greenhouse gas emissions occur. Only a small proportion of these emissions occur in Sweden and measures in other countries are therefore crucial to our chances of reaching the Climate Convention goals and avoiding dangerous climate change. The same applies to the *Reduced Climate Impact* environmental quality objective.

The EU plays a key role in international climate negotiations, partly by being a driving force during the negotiations themselves and partly through efforts made within the Union. The EU has long since been by far the most important driving force within the Climate Convention framework. This is partly the result of Swedish endeavours.

Air pollution is often both long-range and transboundary. Environmental requirements for vehicle emissions are harmonised within the EU. Ground-level ozone is a much greater health threat than previously thought. Ninety per cent of the ground-level ozone in Sweden is due to emissions in other countries. Emissions of acidifying pollutants have decreased over the last 15 years. About 15,000 Swedish lakes and their adjacent land are still contaminated as a

result of acidification. Influence must therefore be exerted on European air quality regulations.

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION: CHEMICALS, INCLUDING PESTICIDES, AND RESOURCE AND WASTE ISSUES

A decision was taken at the Johannesburg 2002 World Summit to develop an international ten-year framework on sustainable production and consumption. The EU's efforts with resources, waste and chemicals are an important part of such a framework.

EU chemicals legislation includes totally harmonised directives that provide little scope for divergent national regulations. The Government stresses the importance therefore of Sweden acting as a strong driving-force in future legislative work on both chemicals and pesticides.

EU legislation must be influenced if Sweden is to achieve the *Non-Toxic Environment* quality objective. The European Commission has presented a proposal for new chemicals legislation, REACH (Registration Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals). In practice, REACH involves the registration, evaluation and authorisation of both new and existing chemical substances. Industry is accountable for uncovering more knowledge about the properties of chemical substances. This information is to be put into a common EU register. The Government's aim is for the precautionary and substitution principles to permeate the new legislation. Chemicals that have not been thoroughly tested shall not be introduced.

Products impact the environment across borders. As a result, the Government wishes to create a product policy that provides the prerequisites for an efficient internal market with more trade and lasting protection for human health and the environment. Sweden should take an active role in the efforts of the Commission to develop both an integrated product policy and resource use and waste recovery strategies.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND BIODIVERSITY

The Swedish EPA has submitted a report outlining a proposal for a 16th environmental quality objective on biodiversity. The Government plans to return to the Riksdag with a concrete proposal no later than 2005.

In its Sixth Environmental Action Programme, the EU vows to halt

biodiversity decline by 2010. This goal was underlined by the World Summit in Johannesburg. Efforts within the EU to achieve this goal for 2010 and to attain sustainable development in general are based on the premise of natural resources being managed and biodiversity and environmental values being preserved in a long-term sustainable fashion. Work to preserve biodiversity and cultural values is incorporated in most of the national environmental quality objectives.

The European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) affects several of the quality objectives, namely: *A Varied Agricultural Landscape, Zero Eutrophication, A Non-Toxic Environment, A Balanced Marine Environment, Flourishing Coastal Areas and Archipelagos and Flourishing Lakes and Watercourses.*

Sweden must act within the CAP to ensure more environmental consideration is taken, thereby increasing our chances of reaching the objectives and interim targets. The same thing applies to the European Common Fisheries Policy. Sweden must therefore prioritise efforts at EU level to be able to achieve the interim targets pertaining to Swedish biodiversity. This has become even more important bearing in mind the EU's imminent enlargement.

Sweden should also strive within the EU to avoid the negative impact of alien species and populations, which will make these quality objectives more difficult to attain.

THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Many of Sweden's coastal and marine areas are badly affected by eutrophication, toxic substances, overfishing and physical exploitation. Sweden's marine environment is still deteriorating and the Government wishes to allocate the highest priority to Swedish efforts in marine issues at the European level. The environmental state of many coastal areas has, however, improved considerably. Our chances of solving the above-mentioned problems and to achieve the *Balanced Marine Environment, Flourishing Coastal Areas and Archipelagos* objective are dependent on good European co-operation. Through the EU, Sweden must carry marine environment issues forward in international marine conventions. Sweden also attaches considerable importance to the Commission's upcoming strategy for the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

Swedish environmental quality objectives and EU work

REDUCED CLIMATE IMPACT

International co-operation is necessary if we are to be able to achieve the *Reduced Climate Impact* quality objective. Sweden should strive to initiate negotiations on international requirements as soon as possible for the period after the first Kyoto Protocol 2008–2012 commitment period. Via the EU, Sweden should encourage all industrial countries and selected developing countries to act in a way, which will ensure fulfilment of the climate convention's long-term goals. Common European efforts should consist of measures that would benefit from coordination on the EU level and that strengthen the credibility of the Union in international negotiations.

A number of activities began in 2000 under the collective name of ECCP (The European Climate Change Programme). The aim of these measures is to help the EU to fulfil its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol.

CLEAN AIR

Continued high priority needs to be allocated to EU work in order to achieve the *Clean Air* quality objective. For example, Sweden needs to take an active role in developing a European strategy to combat air pollution – the so-called CAFE programme (Clean Air for Europe). Sweden should be a driving force in the EU's efforts in the area of vehicle emissions and fuel by formulating new objectives.

NATURAL ACIDIFICATION ONLY

Further high priority needs to be given to EU work to achieve the *Natural Acidification Only* quality objective, as a considerable amount of acidifying emissions come from outside Sweden. Active participation by Sweden in developing the Clean Air for Europe strategy is also essential in this respect.

NON-TOXIC ENVIRONMENT

Our chances of being able to achieve the *Non-Toxic Environment* objective are highly dependent on the development of EU legislation. In the long run, more stringent regulations on chemicals, including pesticides, are needed within the EU. Efforts to develop chemicals and pesticides legislation must therefore receive high priority.

A PROTECTIVE OZONE LAYER

Continued high priority needs to be allocated to EU work in order to achieve the *Protective Ozone Layer* quality objective. Sweden should strive to ensure that the EU carries forward international efforts to accelerate the phase out of any remaining production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances. This includes the rapid phase-out of HCFC use in developing countries.

It is therefore important to help developing countries to implement their pledges. A more rapid procedure for adding new substances under the Montreal Protocol is also important.

A SAFE RADIATION ENVIRONMENT

The *Safe Radiation Environment* objective will be achieved by national measures, according to the Government. International co-operation does, however, exist in the field of radiation protection. At the EU level, the Government feels that the following issues should receive priority:

- ★ An EC directive for the classification of solid radioactive waste and contaminated products not related to nuclear power.
- ★ Support to safety and radiation protection efforts in the accession countries and in Russia.
- ★ Greater knowledge about the possible health risks of electromagnetic radiation, especially when many people are exposed to it.

ZERO EUTROPHICATION

To achieve the *Zero Eutrophication* objective, high priority must be allocated to reforming the CAP to bring about a reduction in phosphorus and nitrogen emissions (particularly to water) from agriculture. As a result of EU enlargement, the nutrient load on the

Baltic Sea should diminish. It is also important to work for the introduction of relevant legal instruments within the EU to combat eutrophication on land and in water. This may concern nitrogen oxide (NO_x) emissions and other eutrophying substances from sources such as road traffic.

FLOURISHING LAKES AND WATERCOURSES

The interim targets of the *Flourishing Lakes and Watercourses* objective require several national measures to enable European member states to fulfil their obligations regarding the preservation and safeguarding of Nature 2000 sites containing lakes and watercourses. The EU guidelines for the introduction of alien species should be tightened in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Government also attaches considerable importance to reducing emissions of acidifying and eutrophying substances within the EU.

HIGH-QUALITY GROUNDWATER

It is particularly important within the EU to promote the regulation of pesticides that damage the environment in order to achieve the *High-Quality Groundwater* objective. The aim of Swedish efforts with regard to the EU Water Framework Directive should be to strengthen existing quality requirements for groundwater and adapt them to Swedish conditions.

A BALANCED MARINE ENVIRONMENT, FLOURISHING COASTAL AREAS AND ARCHIPELAGOS

Sweden attaches considerable importance to the Commission's efforts to develop a strategy for the protection and preservation of the marine environment and for the creation of a network of protected sites. The strategy is due to be submitted in 2005 and is expected to be a useful instrument to help achieve the *Balanced Marine Environment, Flourishing Coastal Areas and Archipelagos* objective.

Efforts to reduce other countries' nutrient discharges must be intensified. Sweden should actively promote a common, sustainable and efficiently controlled fisheries policy. Sweden should also highlight the issue of the Baltic Sea needing more stringent regulations than other sea areas when it comes to pollution from shipping. This also applies to requirements on ballast water management and NO_x

emissions from shipping. In partnership with other EU member states, Sweden shall pave the way for the adoption in 2004 of the Convention on Ballast Water Management currently being discussed within the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). It is also important for Sweden to carry forward the issue of introducing differentiated environmental charges for European shipping lanes and harbours.

THRIVING WETLANDS

National measures to protect and restore wetlands in the agricultural landscape are the key to achieving the *Thriving Wetlands* objective. Sweden should therefore make efforts within the EU to ensure that neither the CAP nor various other directives make achieving the objective more difficult. Sweden should urge the EU to be a member of the International Convention on Wetlands, the Ramsar Convention. Efforts are also important regarding the sustainable use and preservation of transboundary bird and fish populations.

HEALTHY FORESTS

The *Healthy Forests* objective can be effectively achieved through national decisions and measures. Swedish national nature conservation policy is favourable to this area. This objective is dependent on measures implemented with regard to other objectives, primarily *Thriving Wetlands* and *Natural Acidification Only*. EU co-operation must be managed in accordance with the subsidiarity principle. According to this principle, the EU shall only implement measures if these are more effective than national, regional or local actions. This is sometimes referred to as the proximity principle.

Within the EU, Sweden should first and foremost strive to make these objectives achievable, by for example combating air pollution. Sweden should make active efforts to ensure environmental monitoring measures and common activities are designed so as to add value to national monitoring systems.

A VARIED AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The *Varied Agricultural Landscape* objective is directly dependent on the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Sweden should therefore actively endeavour to ensure that the general production and direct support subsidies are eventually phased out and replaced by

targeted, well-motivated and goal-oriented subsidies. Such subsidies will help reduce the negative environmental impact of agriculture, whilst positive environmental effects, such as the maintenance and preservation of the agricultural landscape and its high natural environment and cultural heritage values, will increase.

A MAGNIFICENT MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPE

The *Magnificent Mountain Landscape* objective can mostly be achieved through national measures. At the EU level, Sweden should promote the formulation of regulations restricting noise from off-road motor scooters. It is also important for Sweden to create a system within the European Water Framework Directive enabling measures to be taken in our neighbouring countries.

A GOOD BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Concerning the *Good Built Environment* objective, EU work needs to centre on the overarching issues of products and waste in a lifecycle perspective. This includes participating in work done by the Commission to formulate an integrated product policy (IPP). Energy and the indoor environment are important when it comes to buildings. Sweden should promote the inclusion of an environmental, health and lifecycle approach in the European Building Products Directive. Energy use in buildings and noise requirements on modes of transport are central aspects of EU work. Issues relating to resource management and waste recovery strategies are also important.

Tools for implementing the priorities

LEGISLATION

The Government considers legislation and the application of Community law to be important instruments in order to implement EU environmental policies with respect to the adoption of new legal instruments and their compliance.

ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTS

Sweden should promote the introduction of minimum levels for environment-related taxes at the EU level within several policy areas. It is also important for minimum levels to be appropriate and that new market-based instruments, such as emission rights trading, are introduced more widely within the EU.

The aim of economic instruments in the environmental field is to incorporate environmental costs into the price of products and services. The polluter should pay for the damage he causes. The design of the tax system is particularly important for environmental control.

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Sweden should continue to influence the formulation and interpretation of Community public procurement legislation to provide scope for placing environmental demands on suppliers.

PHASING-OUT ENVIRONMENTALLY DAMAGING SUBSIDIES

Subsidies that damage the environment and that counteract sustainable development should be phased out. If not, they should at least be reformed. One aim of the CAP reform should be to promote sustainable agriculture and food production. European fisheries policy should be amended so that support encourages the sustainable consumption of fishery resources.

EU FUNDS

Sustainable development should continue to be the overarching aim of cohesion policies. EU enlargement will bring with it demands to even out the inequalities in living standards between new and old member states. Measures will also be needed to improve the environment in the new member states. When the provisions of EC regional and structural policy, development assistance policy and other common policy areas are reviewed, Sweden should also work to fulfil its own national environmental objectives.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The participation of Swedish scientists in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Development (RTD) should be encouraged for the sake of the environment and sustainability. Our authorities should therefore promote such participation. The Government will consider how the new National Centre for Environmental Technology can best take advantage of the ideas, which are expected to emanate from the Commission's work on an environmental technology action plan.

INFORMATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

The Government wants Sweden to promote a pan-European eco-labelling strategy. Such a strategy can provide consumers with useful guidance. Continued coordination of the EU Flower and Nordic Swan labels should also be encouraged. Eco-labelling should guide consumers and purchasers when they choose green products. It is also an important tool in our quest for sustainable development. Sweden should continue to be the driving-force behind EU efforts to further develop the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and the Environmental Product Declaration (EPD).

The aim of EMAS, a voluntary scheme, is to promote the environmental work of organisations and provide information to the general public. All operators can be EMAS approved. The Swedish EMAS Council acts as the competent EMAS authority in Sweden. The EMAS Council is also responsible for developing Environmental Product Declarations (EPD).

REPORTING AND EVALUATION

National reporting and evaluation activities should be co-ordinated with the extensive development work that is on-going in this field within the EU and internationally. Sweden should work to ensure that the number of indicators is restricted and co-ordinated both within the EU and in other international contexts.

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objectives



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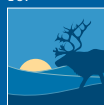
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1. Reduced Climate Impact
2. Clean Air
3. Natural Acidification Only
4. A Non-Toxic Environment
5. A Protective Ozone Layer
6. A Safe Radiation Environment
7. Zero Eutrophication
8. Flourishing Lakes and Watercourses
9. High-Quality Groundwater
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Flourishing Coastal Areas and Archipelagos
11. Thriving Wetlands
12. Healthy Forests
13. A Varied Agricultural Landscape
14. A Magnificent Mountain Landscape
15. A Good Built Environment

In its communication "EU priorities to achieve the Swedish environmental quality objectives" (Government communication 2003/04:9), the Swedish Government presents its priorities for Swedish efforts within European environmental work. The way the Swedish environmental quality objectives are formulated is an important starting-point.

To achieve these objectives, the Government wishes to prioritise efforts within four main areas: First and foremost, the Government wishes to highlight the marine environment. Sweden's coastal and sea areas are seriously affected by eutrophication, toxic substances, overfishing and exploitation. Our chances of solving these problems are to a large extent dependent on developing EU co-operation and on Sweden carrying marine environment issues forward in international conventions.

Other issues receiving priority from the Government include air pollution abatement, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and less acidification. The Government also stresses the importance of restricting the spread of chemicals and pesticides and of efficient waste management. The future sustainable management of natural resources and the preservation of biodiversity are also key issues.

This brochure is a summary of the Government communication. In the event of discrepancy between the wording of the summary and the communication, the latter shall be the valid text.

The brochure is available in electronic form on the Swedish Ministry of the Environment's website at www.miljo.regeringen.se or in printed form by ordering a copy from the Ministry on +46 8 405 1000. Reference number M 2003.11.



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