



ECOSOC • Integration Segment (27–29 May, 2014)
SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

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SWEDEN

Contribution to the 2014 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Integration Segment



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**Sweden's input to the 2014 ECOSOC Integration Segment
on Sustainable Urbanisation**

1. What has been the experience of your country in using urbanisation as a tool for the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development?

- In Sweden, urbanisation is not organised nationally. The Swedish model implies that local governments are responsible for urban planning, which means that challenges and possibilities related to urbanisation most of all are of local interest. This approach also means that local governments/cities use different tools to integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in urbanisation depending on the local context.
- Urbanisation is a fast process in Sweden that has affected several areas of society. Most of all, it has led to a lack of housing in the bigger cities of Sweden. Sustainable urbanisation and planning is important to Sweden, both in the process of building new houses and neighbourhoods and in the process of upgrading older ones.

2. What kinds of investments have been made in your cities to make them hubs of sustainability?

- Investments are made continuously to make cities all around Sweden more sustainable. As an example, we would like to mention a governmental initiative to financially support projects for development of sustainable cities during 2009 -2012 called the "Delegation for Sustainable Cities". This initiative gave support to various types of investments with the common goal to decrease the negative impact on the climate as well as to highlight other important dimensions of sustainability, from a more social or economic perspective. An evaluation of the work of the Delegation for Sustainable Cities will be published later in 2014.

- During the 1960's and 1970's many housing areas were built that are now in need of upgrading. The Delegation for Sustainable Cities supported a number of upgrading-projects in such housing areas. Aspects such as heavily decreased energy consumption; participation of the inhabitants; new physical structures etc. have been central features of the initiatives that have been given financial support.
- The Delegation also supported investments in new housing areas. These investments have for example been focussing on building houses with very low energy consumption, increasing cooperation between relevant actors and increasing civic participation.
- The Delegation also highlighted the need for research and development of knowledge related to sustainable urban development.
- Another initiative was The Climate Investment Programmes (Klimp), in progress 2003-2012. The environmental investments total was approx. 6 billion SEK, where government grants have financed 20 % of the costs. 124 local investment programmes containing 751 local or regional projects have been implemented, most of them in the cities as a part of urban sustainability.
- The government has commissioned The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning together with other key agencies to establish a National Platform to promote sustainable urban development. The Platform has taken over the role of the Delegation and carries on part of their work.
- The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has been commissioned to develop a proposal for a strategy with interim targets and specific measures to achieve the environmental objective *A Good Built Environment*. Spatial planning is one important tool for reaching this objective.
- In 2014 the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning was commissioned by the government to produce guidance for local authorities on sustainability provisions of the Planning and Building Act.

3. How have you addressed specific urbanisation challenges in an integrated way?

- There are a few examples of housing areas where available knowledge have been used in a very conscious way to address and test sustainable development from a social, environmental and economic perspective. The most well-known internationally is the neighbourhood "Hammarby Sjöstad" in Stockholm. These housing areas are at the forefront in terms of applying an integrated approach to sustainable urbanisation. The development of these

areas must continuously be evaluated so that positive and negative experiences can be drawn and used in new projects.

- Another example of an integrated approach is the Swedish trademarked approach SymbioCity (launched in 2008). The SymbioCity Approach promotes an integrated and multidisciplinary method to urban development, which is relevant in both developing and developed countries. SymbioCity aims to create synergies by integrating different technologies and city functions, such as turning waste into energy, and waste water into fuel.

4. What kinds of institutional structures are in place in your country for effective governance, policy-making and planning for sustainable urbanization?

- Sweden's Planning and Building Act defines the planning procedures. The municipalities/local governments set the framework and the overarching objectives that the developers have to fulfil before they are given a contract. The Municipalities have the mandate to decide on changes in land use through a planning process where various stakeholders are involved. Certain governmental agencies are responsible for pointing out areas and facilities of national importance. The Municipalities are obliged to recognise these areas in their comprehensive plan, which covers the complete Municipality. When a decision that changes the land use is taken – by the Municipality or by a court – national importance is considered. A decision that affects areas of national importance can be challenged by a governmental agency.
- The Act ensures that different aspects of importance as well as potentially contradicting goals are highlighted – and resolved – during the planning process. Moreover, it is legally required to let people have a say during the planning process. Stakeholders have the right to appeal on the Municipality's development plan if they are not satisfied with how their interests have been addressed.
- The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (Boverket) is the main governmental/national agency responsible for planning and policy-making for sustainable urbanisation. It has a prescriptive as well as advisory mandate. Other agencies that contribute with central knowledge in regards to sustainable urbanisation are e.g. the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket), the Swedish National Heritage Board (Riksantikvarieämbetet) and the Swedish Transport Administration (Trafikverket).

5. What are some innovations and partnerships that demonstrate the power of urbanisation in the integration of three dimensions of sustainable development in your country?

- The Delegation for Sustainable Cities mentioned above was launched to address the three dimensions of sustainability in urbanisation and to show and share positive experiences and relevant knowledge to a large public. The Delegation consisted of actors from different sectors and with different roles, e.g. academia, private sector, national agencies, local governments, interest/lobbying organisations, housing companies, environmental specialists etc. The composition of different stakeholders contributed to having an integrated approach to sustainable urbanisation.