



Extensive Swedish and European initiatives in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine

At a press conference on Wednesday 13 April, Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren and Minister for Public Administration Ida Karkiainen reported on the Government's overall efforts in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Government's efforts cover three areas: sanctions against Russia, support to Ukraine and a stronger Sweden.

Sweden and the EU have undertaken extensive efforts in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Sweden's Government is pushing for additional sanctions against Russia and has decided on both military and humanitarian support to Ukraine, along with historic initiatives to strengthen Swedish civil and military defence.

Sanctions against Russia

The EU has thus far adopted five sanctions packages against Russia. These sanctions include freezing Russian state assets in the EU and the exclusion of major Russian banks from payment systems. Sanctions targeting specific sectors of Russia's economy have also been imposed. The latest sanctions package includes sanctions against additional banks and individuals with ties to Russian government officials, and a ban on Russian coal.

“The Government is pushing for additional and harsher sanctions against Russia. We want to see a ban on imports of Russian oil, but it is important that they be imposed by a unified EU so that the sanctions have an impact,” said Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren at the press conference.

Support to Ukraine

Sweden was already one of the largest aid donors to Ukraine prior to war. Since the invasion, Sweden has decided to provide military and humanitarian support to Ukraine in excess of SEK 1.8 billion. The EU has also substantially increased its support, with a package amounting to EUR 2.7 billion. Together with Poland, Sweden is now working to organise a donor conference for Ukraine in May.

A stronger Sweden

Initiatives to strengthen Sweden centre around a historic investment in military and civil defence, the economy, food security, energy and migration issues.

To address the ongoing refugee crisis, which is the largest in Europe since the Second World War, the Government has presented a number of proposed measures to secure the orderly reception of refugees from Ukraine. To support the municipalities in this work, SEK 500 million have been allocated in the form of a temporary grant.

“Sweden will assume its responsibility but expects other countries in the EU to do the same. The Government also expects all municipalities in Sweden to contribute, with a much more even distribution of refugees between municipalities than during the 2015 refugee crisis,” says Minister for Public Administration Ida Karkiainen.

The Government has also adopted measures to address price increases and mitigate the effects on Swedish businesses and households, such as temporarily reduced fuel tax, an extension of compensatory payments for electricity in southern and central Sweden, and measures to accelerate the transition to fossil-free fuels. In the Spring Amending Budget for 2022, the Government also presents a support package of SEK 1 billion to maintain Swedish food security.

County administrative board status reports

On 10 March 2022, the Government instructed the country administrative boards to present regular status reports to the Government Offices. These status reports are based on contacts with all the municipalities and regions throughout the country.

“The current overall assessment is that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is having a moderate impact on Swedish society as a whole,” says Ms Karkiainen.

The latest status report, received on 12 April, indicates that there is still major need for information and cooperation, even if a number of counties report lower intensity in developments. Challenges regarding the reception of unaccompanied minors were also raised.

Finally, the county administrative boards also see an increasing impact on the business sector, where prices for fuel, energy, feedstuffs and building materials are having major consequences in certain sectors.

Strong EU unity

International and European cooperation has been intensive since the invasion of Ukraine. Some 30 or so Council meetings have been held in the EU, and the European Council plans to hold an extra summit on 30–31 May.

“This horrific war is among the worst in Europe since the Second World War. It has torn up the European security order that every leader in our part of the world has backed, in Helsinki in 1975 and in Paris in 1990. At the same time, this has brought about exceptionally strong unity in European cooperation that we now see. Approval of the sanctions against Russia and support to Ukraine have been enormous. I hope, and believe, that we will also continue to see such unity going forward,” says Mr Dahlgren.

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The Swedish Government leads the way on climate-smart, circular procurement

As one of the focuses of this year's budget, the Swedish Government is tasking the National Agency for Public Procurement with devising ways of strengthening and developing public procurement to promote the climate transition and the shift to a circular economy.

There are substantial opportunities for using public procurement as a strategic tool in the transition to a circular, fossil-free economy. Public procurement spending totals almost SEK 800 billion a year. Working to make public procurement circular, non-toxic and fossil-free will make a genuine difference in reducing carbon emissions and the unsustainable use of resources.

The assignment is consistent with the circular economy strategy and is also based on a proposal from the innovation partnership programme Climate neutral industry. The proposal states that the Government should be leading the way, and that government agencies therefore need to procure products and services that are less toxic, and more circular, fossil-free and sustainable.

- In Sweden, public procurement accounts for almost SEK 800 billion a year. It has been proposed, including by the Government's innovation partnership programme, that the Government and government agencies should be at the forefront of circular, non-toxic and climate-smart procurement. Leading the way on the climate transition also provides an opportunity to further contribute to the business sector's transition and create future jobs, says Minister for Business, Industry and Innovation Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson.

- Climate change poses enormous challenges for Sweden, along with the rest of the world. But it also presents a huge opportunity for us to create green jobs and new investments. Cooperation between the various actors in society

is crucial here. The Government should be at the forefront, encouraging demand for climate-neutral, circular products and services. It's a way of pursuing our own green industrial revolution and accelerating the pace of the green transition, comments Minister for Climate and the Environment, Annika Strandhäll.

- The Government, municipalities and regions have an important role to play in the green transition. By imposing clear requirements for climate-neutral, circular products and services in their procurement processes, the public sector can lead the way and help create the green jobs of the future, says Minister for Public Administration Ida Karkiainen.

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