



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

First Generation to Eradicate Poverty

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Opinion piece by the Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate, and Deputy Prime Minister Isabella Lövin and the Minister for Education, Gustav Fridolin in The Huffington Post, 9 June 2016.

The last decades hundreds of millions of people have left extreme poverty. Today more than 90 percent of all children are enrolled in school, even in developing countries. Thanks to digitalization we are more closely interconnected with each other than ever before. Knowledge and ideas flow throughout the world and transcend all previous boundaries.

At the same time, the world is younger than ever. Almost half of the world's population is younger than 25. Together, we now have a unique opportunity to continue creating a better, more sustainable future. And we have recently taken some important steps. Last year, 2015, the world came together to agree on three milestones: the climate agreement in Paris, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for financing development and not least the UN Agenda 2030.

With the Agenda 2030, for the first time in history the world has one, integrated agenda for both development and environmental sustainability. We can't have one without the other. Poverty eradication without respect for the ecosystems and the planets limited resources is a dead end. This creates new visions, new possibilities — and challenges.

But we all know that plans and visions are not enough. The urgency of

putting words into action is underlined when we consider the climate change, the refugee crisis, the growing number of conflicts and wars, the threat of global terrorism, fundamentalism and hate speech, or the fact that more than one billion people are still lacking electricity. It is obvious that the world so far has failed to deal with the greatest challenges of our time.

The world needs countries that are willing to lead the way toward the fulfillment of the Agenda 2030. We are proud to declare that Sweden is committed to be such a country. Four areas are especially important in fulfilling the agenda:

- Including youth. This spring, Sweden launched the global campaign "#Firstgeneration." First Generation implies the generations and civil society actors who, thanks to digitalization, have access to networks and new knowledge and thus have a unique opportunity to use the 2030 Agenda and the global goals to build new solutions for a sustainable future — a future that can end poverty! Around the world we will organize activities and collaborations including everything from innovation competitions, university activities to social-media initiatives. A key target group is the teachers around the world. The crucial role of teachers in society, as well as their position as role models and sources of inspiration, gives them unique opportunities to pursue sustainability issues and influence our future.
- Climate. Sweden is committed to become one of the first fossil-free welfare nations in the world. Sweden used to be a country very dependent on fossil fuels. Since the oil crises in the '70s, we have been working systematically to reduce energy consumption and to increase the share of renewables. During the same period our economy has developed very fast. We opt for sustainable-energy sources for the sake of the climate, but also because it is economically sound. We believe it is much smarter to be the first one to enter the new economy, rather than being the last one depending on old solutions. Sweden is also the largest per capita contributor to the Green Climate Fund.
- Feminism. Sweden is the first country in the world to pursue a feminist foreign policy. Ensuring that women and girls can enjoy their fundamental human rights is both an obligation within the framework of our international commitments and a prerequisite for sustainable development. Investing in gender equality and promoting opportunities for non-traditional education and career choices for both boys and girls is of utmost importance. Investing in girls' education in particular is one of the most effective measures to promote gender equality and to contribute to economic and social development.

- Coherence. Coherence is a fundamental part of the Agenda. Sweden has a long tradition of working with policy coherence for global sustainable development, through what we call Policy for Global Development. Every Ministry has to produce its own action plans on how to achieve greater policy coherence for development. The Government recently appointed a multi-stakeholder National Committee to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda throughout Swedish society. The responsibility includes conducting an assessment of the extent to which Sweden fulfills the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, submitting a proposal for an overarching action plan for Sweden's implementation and working to include all relevant actors. Civil society organizations, municipalities, academia, private sector and trade unions are essential in this endeavour, since we know that every part of the society needs to work together if we are to succeed.

We now have 15 years ahead of us to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030. We are convinced that it is possible to achieve the goals and to create a better future for us all. But we need to get to work at once, and we need to do it together. We are convinced UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is right: We are the first generation that could end poverty and the last one to limit climate change. Let us jointly rise to that challenge.



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of the Environment

Establishment of new arrivals to Sweden to be reformed

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Events in the rest of the world affect us all. Terrorist organisation IS hunting down fleeing families, children being abducted by Boko Haram, repressive states persecuting journalists. These events provoke abhorrence against the perpetrators, but they also arouse empathy with the victims.

Questions are raised around every breakfast table: What if it was our family under threat? What if it was our children hearing the shelling at night? Many people in Sweden bear personal memories of repression that are now being reawakened.

Today almost 50 million people in the world are displaced. This is the most serious refugee situation since the Second World War. Conflicts around the world are forcing people to leave behind everything they own to seek security in another country. They are fleeing in desperation from war, torture, repression, abuses and rape.

One or two of every thousand refugees in the world seek asylum in Sweden. We bear a small part of the global responsibility, but in the short term it is still a major challenge, even for a rich country such as Sweden. Our values and our respect for human dignity mean that we have a collective duty to help people in distress. This Government will always stand up for a humane asylum policy and unwaveringly defend the right of asylum.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, recently praised Germany and Sweden for setting a good example in taking responsibility for the reception of refugees and providing extensive support to the UNHCR. At present, just a few EU Member States take in the vast

majority of those seeking asylum in the EU. Sweden will seek international cooperation to enable more EU countries to increase their responsibility for displaced people. In addition, Sweden will take steps in the EU to create more legal channels for people to seek asylum in the EU and to increase the reception of quota refugees in other countries.

Immigration in Sweden is regulated and asylum legislation is based on international conventions and EU law. Those granted asylum begin a journey to build a new life in Sweden. People have a strong drive to create a home, get a job and a secure income, use their skills and find their place in society. The Government's policy for getting immigrants established builds on this drive.

Handled properly, the reception of immigrants offers a massive opportunity. For many years, public debate has been characterised by concern over the demographic challenge whereby young people of the future will have to provide for an increasing number of elderly people.

The increased number of immigrants arriving in Sweden helps create better prospects of tackling this challenge.

Many of those who come to Sweden are of working age and have an education – often a higher education – and professional experience. Just as it did with the waves of immigration from Latin America, the Middle East and the Balkans in the 1980s and 1990s, Sweden's reception of refugees will bring new colleagues, neighbours, friends and family members who will help to build Sweden's prosperity. In the global economy, having good knowledge of regions, cultures and languages brings a competitive advantage, not least for an export-dependent country such as Sweden.

But there are significant shortcomings in the current policy concerning the establishment of new arrivals in the labour market and in society. This has been the case for a long time, under both centre-right and Social Democratic governments.

It takes far too long for new arrivals to find work. When not all municipalities take a share of the responsibility for receiving refugees, those who have recently arrived are forced into long stays in accommodation centres instead of being allowed to begin the process of getting settled. The measures offered to new arrivals are not sufficiently well tailored to the circumstances and needs of the target group. Finding the right path, and getting academic certificates assessed and skills validated can take several

years. In some cases there is a lack of opportunities for supplementary education to allow those with vocational training and graduates to find jobs that match their skills. Many people with foreign backgrounds also encounter discrimination.

The Government's focus is on creating more jobs, closing gaps and increasing cohesion in Sweden. For this reason, as soon as this Government came into office we launched a serious project to reform the establishment of new arrivals. In recent weeks, the debate has featured cobbled-together symbolic proposals – which for the most part risk delaying the establishment of immigrants rather than accelerating it. Making life worse for new arrivals, weakening job security or reducing remuneration and wages will not help them become established or increase cohesion in Sweden.

The Government is currently drafting an establishment package of well-founded reforms in four areas. The individual reforms in these four areas will be presented as and when the details are completed in the Government Offices. The first will be presented today.

1. Quickly into work through language, training, validation and housing. Work is key to establishing adults in Swedish society. More people establishing themselves in the labour market requires better Swedish language training, a more efficient validation process and greater opportunities for supplementary education, combined with work placements and jobs. It also requires active anti-discrimination measures in working life. The Government considers that the social partners have an important role to play in ensuring more rapid establishment in the labour market.

The Government will also present measures to ensure that more housing is built, in both the short and long term. More housing is needed for young people and students as well as new arrivals in parts of the country where the labour market is strong.

2. Every child and young person must receive a good education in preschools and schools. Municipalities will be given increased support to be able to offer newly arrived children and young people a good education in preschools and schools, and the social support needed for young people to get a good start in life. Children and young people should learn Swedish quickly, alongside continuing to develop their mother tongue and subject knowledge.

3. All municipalities must take in refugees. The reception of refugees is a

national concern. All municipalities must play their part to ensure that new arrivals can establish themselves as quickly as possible. At the same time, the municipalities should be allowed better planning opportunities when new arrivals are allocated, and be given reasonable and stable economic conditions.

4. Civil society has a key role to play. Civil society already does a great deal throughout the country to help new arrivals establish themselves. Many people do what they can to give new arrivals a warm reception. This is our country at its best, and it is a way for us to stand united. For this reason, support will be given to efforts by civil society organisations to facilitate their contribution to dignified reception of refugees. This includes a wide range of activities, from contact families and sports for children to mentors from similar professional backgrounds and language cafés.

These are the starting points for the reforms that the Government will present. This also means choosing a way forward for Sweden. We will not present symbolic proposals that worsen the establishment of refugees. Instead, we will implement well-founded reforms as part of a broad establishment package, so that people who come to Sweden can use their skills and benefit from their professional experience. Together we will develop our country.