

Strategy for Sweden's cooperation with UNESCO 2018–2021





Ministry of Education and Research

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1. Scope of the strategy

This strategy forms the basis for Sweden's cooperation with UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) for the period 2018–2021.

Based on the organisation's relevance and effectiveness, the strategy lays down objectives and forms of cooperation for the period covered. The strategy states how Sweden will contribute to strengthening UNESCO's activities and is also intended to contribute to the division of responsibility between Swedish stakeholders.

The strategy is guided by Sweden's policy for global development (PGD) with its overarching objective of contributing to equitable and sustainable global development,¹ the *Policy framework of Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance* (Govt Comm. 2016/17:60), *Human rights, democracy and the principles of the rule of law in Swedish foreign policy* (Govt Comm. 2016/17:62) and the *Strategy for multilateral development policy*,² but other political aims and priorities have also been taken into account.

The strategy starts from UNESCO's mandate and strategic plan. The strategy takes account of the organisational assessment of UNESCO carried out by the Government Offices (Ministry of Education and Research) in 2017 and information about cooperation with UNESCO contributed by missions abroad, government agencies and civil society in Sweden.

¹ Shared responsibility: Sweden's policy for global development (Govt Bill 2002/03:122).

² UD2017/21055/FN

2. UNESCO's mission and mandate

UNESCO's mandate

UNESCO was formed in 1945 and it is a legally, financially and organisationally independent specialised agency within the UN that reports to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

UNESCO's mission is to contribute to peace and security through collaboration between the member states in the areas of education, the sciences, culture as well as communication and information. UNESCO is a knowledge-based organisation with a normative and standard-setting mandate. The UNESCO conventions that have been ratified by Sweden are listed in the *appendix*.

UNESCO should contribute to capacity-building in member states by, at the global, regional and national levels, compiling and disseminating best-practices and advice; compiling statistics and conducting monitoring work; developing and monitoring standards; as well as promoting international and regional cooperation, exchanges of knowledge and partnership.

UNESCO's supreme decision-making body is the General Conference, at which all member states meet every two years to adopt guidelines, programmes and budgets, and to elect the Director-General and members of the boards of various subsidiary bodies and programmes. The General Conference also elects an Executive Board for four years, consisting of representatives of 58 member states. The Executive Board meets twice every year and is responsible for following up decisions of the General Conference and monitoring the implementation of the programme and the budget.

Strategic plan

UNESCO's priorities are laid down by the General Conference in the eight-year strategic plan (Medium Term Strategy 2014–2021), which states that UNESCO will contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, the promotion of sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information. Gender equality and a geographical focus on Africa are global priorities for the work of UNESCO.

The Medium Term Strategy is translated into a four-year programme and a two-year budget. The General Conference in autumn 2017 adopted a programme for 2018–2021 and a budget for 2018–2019. The clear starting point for the new programme is how UNESCO will contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Organisational assessment

The Ministry of Education and Research conducted an organisational assessment of UNESCO in 2017. The conclusion of this review is that UNESCO makes an important contribution to Swedish development cooperation and that the organisation can make a crucial contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, primarily through its normative and standard-setting work. In comparison with the Government's organisational assessment in 2012, the new organisational assessment points out that clear progress has been made with regards to UNESCO's efforts to monitor results thanks to a new format for reporting results and a results framework with fewer and more focused objectives, as well as the fact that the organisation has now adopted an integrated budget framework that includes both member states' assessed contributions and voluntary funds. The on-going challenges set out in the organisational assessment of UNESCO include the need to strengthen work on financing and to improve human resource management and gender equality work.

Financing

UNESCO's total budget for 2018–2019 is USD 1 225 million. Half of the budget is financed through member states' assessed contributions and half through voluntary funds. The contribution of funds from Sweden is about SEK 25 million per year as a member state contribution.³ The voluntary Swedish contribution channelled through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to UNESCO's activities varies and was just over SEK 100 million per year in 2013–2017. This funding is mainly governed by the strategies for Swedish development cooperation adopted by the Government. In relation to other donors of voluntary funding Sweden was the fourth largest contributor to UNESCO in 2017.

³ Refers to the member state assessed contribution levied of 0.956% according to the UN scale of contributions for 2017. The contribution levied for UNESCO is financed from expenditure area 16, appropriation 4:2 *Contribution to UNESCO and ICCROM*. According to OECD-DAC criteria, 60 per cent of the support to UNESCO is counted as official development assistance and is therefore deducted from the budget for development assistance.

Financing is still a challenge for UNESCO partly because the United States has announced its withdrawal from the organisation and has not paid its assessed contribution since 2011, when Palestine was admitted as a member. Moreover, a large number of member states have debts to the organisation due to unpaid assessed contributions, rent of premises, etc. In recent years the reduction of the regular budget has led to major cuts in the Secretariat and programme activities.

3. Direction and priorities for Swedish involvement in UNESCO

Sweden sees UNESCO's potential mainly in its normative work and considers that UNESCO should primarily work on advisory and capacity-building cooperation with governments and public authorities as well as on matters of global importance.

Sweden's involvement in UNESCO will be guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as by gender equality, human rights with an emphasis on freedom of expression and democracy as well as support for the multilateral system and an effective and integrated UN.

Particular weight will be given to headwind issues where Sweden may make a difference globally, such as questions concerning the safety of journalists or questions concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including comprehensive sexuality education.

The Government considers that UNESCO should further improve its activities in above all: i) work for human rights with an emphasis on freedom of expression, ii) sustainable, democratic and inclusive societies, iii) gender equality, iv) environment, climate and oceans and v) an effective and modern organisation.

These are issues where the work of UNESCO has a strategically important role in the UN system and where Sweden can contribute with specialised knowledge and expertise. In these areas Sweden will work to enable UNESCO to achieve clear results and will give particular attention to possible synergies between the work of UNESCO and Swedish development cooperation.

Sweden will emphasise these priorities in all dialogues with UNESCO at central, regional and local levels. Sweden's voluntary funding during the

strategy period will be aligned with Sweden's priorities and approach to UNESCO.

i) UNESCO's work for human rights with an emphasis on freedom of expression

Democracy and respect for human rights have been strengthened in many parts of the world in the past decades.

Despite this progress we now see a global decline for human rights, democracy and the principles of the rule of law. Freedom of expression is being restricted, and media censorship and internet blockades are growing. Impunity and authoritarian forms of government undermine the rule of law in many places. Human rights defenders, journalists and cultural practitioners are subjected to persecution, threats and violence both offline and online. Inequitable access to education means that people in particularly vulnerable situations find it even harder to make their voices heard.

Civil society actors are particularly important for strengthening democratic development as well as the promotion of and respect for human rights.

Support for press freedom and freedom of expression for journalists and other media actors as well as general access to information is of great importance, as is an increase in media and information literacy.

UNESCO has a clear mandate to work on freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, including through periodic publication of the report *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development* as a tool for monitoring and promoting press freedom and freedom of expression as well as media development. UNESCO also contributes to, and is the UN body responsible for, the monitoring of indicators under target 16.10 of the 2030 Agenda.⁴

The issue of freedom of expression also includes artistic expressions and protection of their practitioners. Here UNESCO has a clear mandate, including through work on the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the periodic

⁴ 16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements. Indicator 16.10 1: Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months. Indicator 16.10 2: Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information.

publication of the report *Reshaping Cultural Policies*. The Convention is also intended to support the establishment of functional systems that promote cultural and creative industries and enable the work of artists and cultural practitioners.

Education is a human right. Despite this, millions of young people are still refused education around the world. Education systems also have an important function as conveyors of values and a fundamental role in building and strengthening human rights, gender equality and democracy. A special focus on strengthening equity and quality through curricula and teacher training is crucial for conveying human rights, democracy and the principles of the rule of law.

During the strategy period Sweden will strive to ensure that

- UNESCO strengthens its normative work on press freedom and freedom of expression, the safety of journalists offline and online and the question of impunity for crimes against journalists. Attention will be given to the particular vulnerability of women journalists, and threats and hate directed at journalists will be highlighted.
- UNESCO strengthens its work for everyone's right to information, including through work on media and information literacy and target 16.10 of the 2030 Agenda.
- The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) produces statistics for media development on the basis of goal 16 in the 2030 Agenda.
- UNESCO continues its work for a free, open and safe internet, on the basis of the R.O.A.M principles,⁵ and for the principle that the same rights and freedoms are applicable both offline and online.
- The donor base for long-term financing of the UNESCO report *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development* is broadened.

⁵ Human rights-based, open, accessible for all, multistakeholder-shaped Internet.

- UNESCO strengthens its work for artistic freedom; cultural practitioners' freedom of expression; and cultural practitioners' working conditions and rule of law, including the special vulnerability of women cultural practitioners.
- UNESCO strengthens respect for quality education as a human right and promotes the role of education as an intermediary of democratic values.

ii) UNESCO's work for sustainable, democratic and inclusive societies

Well-functioning, gender-equal, democratic and inclusive societies are essential for economically, environmentally and socially sustainable development. Social inequality, poverty and democratic deficits are among the main causes of conflicts. Violent or nationalist extremism, fundamentalism, systematic use of sexual violence and climate change add to the challenges for sustainable development.

Quality education and knowledge development for all are essential conditions for broad, inclusive and sustainable societal development. Education is also of crucial importance for normalisation and reconstruction in conflict and post-conflict situations.

National education systems must be characterised by a holistic approach to learning that contributes to lifelong learning for all. Globally, adult education and vocational education play an important role for the development of society and the individual, especially when the share of illiterate adults remains high.

UNESCO has the mandate of coordinating and supporting member states in the implementation of goal 4 (Education) in the 2030 Agenda.⁶ UNESCO has a particular added value in supporting countries to achieve target 4.7 of the 2030 Agenda, which aims to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.⁷ Education for sustainable development and global citizenship education are important tools to increase knowledge and skills about sustainability

⁶ Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

⁷ Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

including environment and climate issues, human rights, equity, gender equality and work on fundamental values and democracy.

Despite major progress, it is still more common in many countries that girls are not given access to schooling. Two-thirds of the illiterate people in the world are women. The role of education in strengthening girls and women and their contribution to sustainable development is of utmost importance for successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The involvement and inclusion of young people in decision-making processes are also important for the creation of long-term sustainable, democratic and inclusive societies.

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage can contribute to the development of knowledge and skills as well as an understanding of how societies have developed. Cultural heritage can also be a crucial resource for the society by contributing to long-term sustainable social, economic and environmental development. Cultural heritage can also play an important role in peace-building and reconciliation processes and contribute to inclusion and participation in society. Destruction of tangible cultural heritage has the ultimate objective of harming social cohesion. The illicit trafficking of cultural objects that follows in its tracks contributes, for instance, to the financing of terrorism.⁸

UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) tries out new methods and searches for new knowledge for long-term sustainable societal development in a global network of biosphere reserves. Sweden's experience from the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Swedish biosphere programme should be able to provide continued assistance to capacity development globally.

During the strategy period Sweden will strive to ensure that

- UNESCO's work in education is characterised by a holistic approach to learning with a focus on national education systems based on inclusive equitable quality education in a safe environment as well as lifelong learning with a clear focus on gender equality.

⁸ See, for example, UN Security Council resolutions S/RES/2199 (2015) and S/RES/2347 (2017).

- UNESCO strengthens its capacity to coordinate and support member states' implementation of goal 4 (Education) in the 2030 Agenda. There should be a special focus on education for sustainable development and global citizenship education; vocational education and adult education; and the role of teachers and teacher training as a basis for social transformation.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) strengthens its global role in monitoring, especially in the area of education, and that UNESCO's *Global Education Monitoring Report*, retains its role as a normative tool.
- UNESCO strengthens its work to prevent and stop the illicit trafficking of cultural objects and that the importance of long-term international, national and regional collaboration in this area is emphasised.
- UNESCO strengthens the importance of culture as a vehicle of social transformation, sustainable development and peace-building and reconciliation in conflict areas, mainly through the Conventions ratified by Sweden.
- The potential of World Heritage sites for economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development is safeguarded and developed. Experiences of national work on world heritage should be reflected in global cooperation.
- UNESCO promotes the opportunities for the involvement and participation of civil society in its work on intangible cultural heritage.
- UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme continues to maintain high quality and that the role of the Programme as a model for sustainable development is strengthened. Experiences of national work on biosphere reserves should be reflected in global cooperation.

iii) UNESCO's work on gender equality

Sweden will be a strong voice in all UNESCO's activities for gender equality and all women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights. Women and men

as well as girls and boys must have the same power to shape society and their own lives.

Gender equality is one of UNESCO's two global priorities.⁹ A gender equality perspective must be integrated systematically in all its work. Gender equality analyses, including analysis of underlying factors, must be conducted systematically and be part of planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting within UNESCO.

UNESCO also runs dedicated programmes with a gender equality focus in areas such as education and science. Despite some success regarding girls' and women's full right to education, only 33 per cent of the countries of the world achieved gender parity in upper secondary education. Still only 30 per cent of the world's researchers are women.

One important instrument for achieving gender equality is access to good quality comprehensive sexuality education to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and strengthen girls' and women's full enjoyment of human rights. Well-functional comprehensive sexuality education is crucial to enable girls' participation in education, reducing the number of teenage pregnancies and preventing HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Even though UNESCO has formal policies and accountability mechanisms for gender equality work, it still needs to strengthen some of its efforts to translate policy into practice when it comes to gender equality. There is also a tendency for UNESCO to focus solely on gender equality interventions aimed at girls and women, and to not include gender equality interventions aimed at boys and men.

During the strategy period Sweden will strive to ensure that

- UNESCO continues to develop its work for gender equality and clearly integrates work on gender equality in all programmes, with a special focus on women in research and women journalists, and that the gender equality interventions adopted in UNESCO's programme for 2018–2021 and the budget for 2018–2019 are implemented.

⁹ UNESCO's Medium Term Strategy 2014–2021

- UNESCO continues to develop its work on comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the area of education.

iv) UNESCO's work on the environment, climate and oceans

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity and it is of central importance to bring about a transition to sustainable development within planetary limits. At present, changes in the environment and climate are already affecting people's opportunities for development and livelihood and are eroding the possibilities of global sustainable development.

The state of the oceans is serious. Sweden aims to strengthen the capacity of the multilateral system to handle global challenges related to the oceans, coastal waters and marine resources. UNESCO's *Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission* (IOC) has an important mandate to strengthen efforts and knowledge in the area of oceans and marine resources,¹⁰ partly by promoting ecosystem-based ocean management and ocean literacy. The IOC also has a coordinating responsibility for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development in 2021–2030.¹¹

Water shortage as a challenge for development is becoming increasingly common. Tensions over shared water resources might also increase the risk of conflicts. UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme (IHP) supports member states in policy development and capacity-building regarding changes in water resources and transboundary water cooperation.

UNESCO has recently updated its strategy for action on climate change.¹² The strategy is aligned with UNESCO's Medium Term Strategy 2014–2021, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the 2030 Agenda. The strategy has four focus areas: supporting member states; promoting interdisciplinary climate knowledge and scientific cooperation; mobilising creative and

¹⁰ The IOC is responsible for two of the targets under goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda and the reporting on its indicators: 14.3: Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels 14 a: Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries.

¹¹ United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (Resolution A/72/L.18)

¹² UNESCO Strategy for Action on Climate Change

cultural diversity to address climate change; and supporting inclusive social development and gender mainstreaming.

Challenges stemming from environmental and climate change ought to be the starting point for UNESCO's scientific work. Capacity building – in cooperation with local, national and regional actors – is crucial.

During the strategy period Sweden will strive to ensure that

- UNESCO develops capacity-building for research systems and enhances knowledge development through interdisciplinary knowledge and research of high quality with relevance for sustainable development.
- IOC is given the conditions to develop capacity and knowledge for managing ocean-related challenges and contributing to the implementation of goal 14 of the 2030 Agenda.
- IOC, in cooperation with other UN agencies, achieves the objective of the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–2030 to effectively compile and increase knowledge about the oceans and the related challenges.
- UNESCO continues to take initiatives to develop ecosystem-based ocean management globally and ocean literacy.
- UNESCO strengthens the work on transboundary water cooperation.
- UNESCO develops its internal climate and environmental work.

v) UNESCO's work for an efficient and modern organisation

Efforts to create an efficient, modern and gender-equal UNESCO should be continued by, for instance, developing its integrated budget framework and structured financing dialogues for greater donor coordination as well as an enhanced evaluation culture supported by reports by, for example, the external auditor and Internal Oversight Service.

To attract and retain the right staff an organisation must be characterised by a human resources policy that makes it possible to combine work and life while providing opportunities for staff rotation.

UNESCO needs to increase the effectiveness and adjust the number and sizes of its country and regional offices to optimise their impact for its priorities and results.

The working methods of UNESCO's governing bodies need to be improved by, for instance, implementing the decisions of the General Conference on governance matters.¹³ In certain cases there is also a continued need to develop and reform work within UNESCO's conventions and subsidiary committees. In UNESCO's World Heritage Committee member states increasingly do not accept expert opinions regarding, for example, nominations to the World Heritage List. In this and similar contexts UNESCO's role as a forum for experts needs to be safeguarded.

During the strategy period Sweden will strive to ensure that

- UNESCO continues its development towards more appropriate and efficient working methods, including in its governing bodies. A special focus should be placed on financing issues to ensure predictable, full and appropriate resourcing, as well as on safeguarding and strengthening a results and evaluation based culture within UNESCO.
- UNESCO works actively for an efficient UN system, including by implementing and monitoring the four-year policy review of UN operational activities for development in 2016¹⁴ and system-wide policy documents.
- UNESCO continues to develop a human resources policy that includes systematic and qualitative staff rotation between and in sectors as well as between headquarters and country and regional offices, and establishes working conditions and IT solutions that make it possible to achieve a sound work-life balance.

¹³ Governance procedures and working methods of the governing bodies of UNESCO (39 C/Res. 20).

¹⁴ Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR)

- UNESCO adapts and develops effective and appropriately dimensioned activities at country and regional levels to maximise the impact for the organisation's priorities.
- The roles of experts on the boards and committees for the cultural conventions ratified by Sweden are safeguarded.
- UNESCO's work is characterised by diversity through, for example, increased cooperation with civil society and gender parity in the nomination of experts, including younger experts, to committees and conferences, etc.

4. Advocacy and forms for collaboration

Sweden will work for the implementation of this strategy through active cooperation and dialogue with UNESCO. The Swedish Delegation to the OECD and UNESCO in Paris plays an important role in proactively contributing to, as well as following and participating in, relevant processes at UNESCO.

The Swedish National Commission for UNESCO also plays an important role through its mandate (terms of reference 2013:123) to assist the Government by providing advice and information in order to contribute to the implementation of this strategy.

Dialogue and collaboration with other actors within the Government Offices and with relevant government agencies is crucial, including Sida, the Swedish Research Council, the National Agency for Education, the Swedish Council for Higher Education, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, the Swedish Arts Council, the Swedish National Heritage Board, the National Archives, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis, the National Museums of World Culture, the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, the Swedish Media Council and the Institute for Language and Folklore. NGOs are an important target for collaboration on implementation of the strategy.

Cooperation between the Nordic countries continues to be important for the exchange of information, coordination and enhanced expertise,

especially in the case of Finland, which is a member of the UNESCO Executive Board in 2017–2021.

Sweden will work actively to make use of Swedish expertise and experience in UNESCO's areas of activity by promoting the recruitment of Swedes to permanent posts in UNESCO and through various programmes for resource base development (for example secondments, Junior Professional Officer [JPO], exchange appointments) for mutual learning and exchanges of expertise.

5. Monitoring and follow-up

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for drafting a work plan for the implementation of the strategy in consultation with relevant agencies.

Work on the strategy is monitored continuously at the organisational consultations held regularly between the Government Offices (Ministry of Education and Research and other relevant ministries), Sida and other relevant government agencies.

The strategy will be reviewed after the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) presents its assessment of UNESCO later in 2018.

A new organisational assessment of UNESCO will be drafted by the Ministry of Education and Research ahead of the next strategy period.

Appendix

UNESCO Conventions ratified by Sweden

Ministry responsible: Ministry of Education and Research

- **Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)**
- **Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region (1979)**
- **Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (1997)**

Ministry responsible: Ministry of the Environment and Energy

- **Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (1971)**

Ministry responsible: Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

- **International Convention against Doping in Sport (2005)**

Ministry responsible: Ministry of Culture

- **Universal Copyright Convention (1952)**
- **Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970)**
- **Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)**
- **Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention (1954)**
- **Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict**
- **Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)**
- **Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)**