

# Regional Outlook 2019

# SWEDEN

## Regional Development Policy in Sweden



### General policy approach

The National Strategy for Sustainable Regional Growth and Attractiveness 2015-20 is focused on a wide array of considerations ranging from innovation and employment to public services and transport. Relative to the prior strategy, it adopts a more cross-sectoral approach and relies on multi-level governance mechanisms for dialogue and learning along with a greater focus on results, monitoring and evaluation. The present strategy has increased the focus on sustainable and inclusive regions and has strengthened the dialogue with stakeholders at the regional level, within a formalised forum for dialogue between the national government and politicians as well as civil servants at the regional level. Regional policy includes rural as well as urban growth considerations.

In 2018, the Swedish parliament approved a governmental bill and a goal for a new coherent rural policy. The objective is to develop “viable rural areas with equal opportunities for enterprise, work, housing and welfare that leads to long-term sustainable development throughout the country”. The policy will involve and activate numerous sectors and policy areas, and aim to strengthen their rural dimension. The policy has a multi-level approach and includes stakeholders from public, private and the non-profit sectors.

Sweden also has a plan for implementing EU rural development funds. In 2018, the government decided upon an urban strategy focused mainly on environmentally sustainable development (handled by the Ministry of the Environment and Energy).

### Recent policy changes

- Sweden has had a long process (almost 20 years) of shifting the responsibility for regional growth policy to the regional level and the responsibility for regional transportation infrastructure planning from regional state agencies to directly elected county councils. As of January 2019, county councils in all counties are now responsible for these issues (with the exception of the county of Gotland, where the municipality will have the responsibilities of both a county council and a municipality).
- The revised National Strategy for Sustainable Regional Growth and Attractiveness 2015-20 was launched in June 2015 with a broader scope than the previous strategy and more of a focus on multi-level governance and dialogue.
- In 2018, the Bill for Coherent Rural Development Policy was approved, aimed at the long-term sustainable development of Sweden’s rural communities (see above for details).
- In April 2018, the Swedish government presented a new strategy for “Sustainable Urban Development – Liveable Cities”, focused mainly on environmentally sustainable development. The strategy includes overall goals for sustainable cities, new milestones in environmental objectives, and new initiatives and priorities. The strategy will be part of the national implementation of the United Nations New Urban Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030.

## Institutional arrangements to prepare for global megatrends

At the national level, the Unit of Economic Policy Analysis within the Economic Division of the Ministry of Finance is responsible for economic development and long-term strategic foresight. Through that role, the unit develops and publishes a “long-term inquiry” (the *Långtidsutredningen*) on a regular basis, with several sub-reports on specific territorial and regional issues: e.g. migration, commuting, places of economic growth and demographic challenges for regions. Regional gross domestic product, workforce and population projections to 2035 are also included, based on the Regional Analysis and Forecasts (Raps) tool for regional planning. This tool, in fact, can be used for analyses on historical developments, forecasts, forward-looking scenarios, comparative regional descriptions, groupings of regions by structure and trends, and regional simulations and impact assessments.

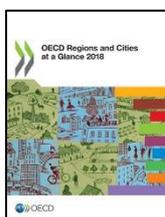
Furthermore, the National Strategy for Sustainable Regional Growth and Attractiveness 2015-20 serves as a guiding policy document for stimulating sustainable regional growth and attractiveness throughout Sweden until 2020. Similarly, the new rural development policy submitted by the government in 2018 is aimed at the long-term sustainable development of Sweden’s rural communities.

At the regional level, regional development strategies are produced in every county; as of January 2019, these strategies are now developed by county councils (except for Gotland). Moreover, regions, in conjunction with national forward-looking agencies, participate in the Region 2050 project in order to build awareness around processes of change, discuss territorial consequences and strategies, and increase strategic foresight competencies among stakeholders.

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### OECD Regional Outlook 2019: Leveraging Megatrends for Cities and Rural Areas

The 2019 edition of the *OECD Regional Outlook* examines the regional dimensions of global megatrends and their implications for the well-being of people living in different places. It discusses how place-based policies, public investment and multi-level governance reforms can respond to these megatrends to revive productivity growth, reduce inequalities, improve quality of life and increase sustainability.

Consult the full publication and the other country profiles on line: <https://oe.cd/pub/2vq>.

