




SWEDEN

A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs

#HLPF2021

WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

COVID-19: WORKERS NEED SDG-DRIVEN RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

The Swedish government has adopted two main line of response to the COVID-19 pandemic. One set of measures targets workers who were made redundant as a result of the pandemic, or those who were already unemployed, through financial support by means of easier access to unemployment benefits and sick leave; other measures are additional skill training and access to higher education. Enterprises and employers have been supported in covering the loss of income they have experienced. This support has been through rent subsidies and financial support to pay for permits or tax reductions.

Trade unions call on the Swedish government to ensure that companies and workers in close contact industries are provided with support and have appropriate working conditions, securing both financial security and reducing the spread of the virus. Once the pandemic is over, unions further call for the Swedish economy to be kick-started through broad investments in welfare, digitalisation, energy and infrastructure, and for unemployment to be addressed through the launch of a broad programme encouraging education and vocational training.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The Swedish government approaches the implementation of the 2030 Agenda holistically. The implementation of the SDGs is overseen by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment, with focal points present within different departments.

will be taken onboard, the previous action plan did include activities which were supported by trade unions, such as the Global Deal Partnership, which aims to address the challenges in the global labour market and enable all people to benefit from globalisation.

While the Swedish government's current action plan on the SDGs expired in 2020, a forthcoming national plan aims to integrate the SDGs and the reporting on their implementation at different levels: SDG targets are to be incorporated across the board in all government activities, and reporting on progress is to be done as part of a special budget report and as part of a presentation made to the Parliament, each made at least once every mandate period. Information and consultation sessions on the new plan have taken place and with a broad spectrum of civil society, including trade unions. Although it is not yet clear which of the trade union recommendations

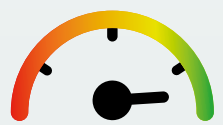
There is a dialogue between the government and social partners on policy reforms linked to the implementation of the SDGs. However, trade union partners believe the focus of the discussion in this context to be too narrow, as it centres on SDGs 8 and 13. Trade unions suggest that the topics for discussion should further be focused on SDGs 5 and 10, as well as the Global Deal Partnership and the importance of social dialogue. To this end, trade unions have presented the government with contributions and recommendations on how to promote advances in these areas.

TRANSPARENCY



Regular access to limited information

CONSULTATION



Structured multi-stakeholder platform

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



Social partners submit joint contributions to the government's SDG national plan



IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

Sweden has one of the highest levels of human development in the world, ranking 7th in the HDI index in 2019. Nevertheless, 18.8 per cent of all people in Sweden, and 19.6 per cent of women, are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, suggesting that further efforts on meeting **target 1.1 (eradicate extreme poverty for all people)** are needed. The indicators on **target 1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures)** are good: in 2018, the universal health service coverage index stood at 86 per cent and the proportion of population with access to affordable medicines and vaccines on a sustainable basis stood at 75 per cent. Total government spending on essential services stood at 24.4 per cent of the budget in 2017.

More efforts are needed to reach **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work)**, as women and girls still spend more of their time on unpaid domestic work and care than men (16.4 per cent for women vs 12.8 per cent for men in 2011). Indicators on **target 5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels)** are good, as between 2015-2019, 89.3 per cent of women and girls obtained at least some secondary education. Gender budgeting procedures implemented by the government ensure the regular analysis of spending from a gender-sensitive perspective.

Meeting **target 8.3 (promote policies that support productive activities, decent job creation)** remains a challenge, as the Swedish labour market is increasingly more insecure, especially for temporary employees. Longer-term positions are increasingly being replaced by on-demand employees and day labourers, who are more precarious by nature. Women (19 per cent, compared to 15 per cent men), 16-24-year-olds (56 per cent, compared with 21 per cent among 25-34-year-olds and 9 per cent among 35-44-year-olds) and foreign-born people (24 per cent, compared with 15 per cent among individuals born in Sweden) are more likely to hold a temporary employment. With regard to **target 8.5 (achieve full and productive employment and decent work)**, the total unemployment rate stood at 8.3 per cent in 2020 but was significantly higher for the 15-24 age group: 24 per cent; in 2020, underemployment stood at 6.3 per cent. The number of NEETs ("not in employment, education or training") mentioned in **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment,**

education or training) stood at 6.5 per cent in 2020. Indicators on **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)** are exceptionally good, as collective bargaining coverage stood at 90 per cent in 2015 (83 per cent in the public sector and 100 per cent in the private sector) and in 2018, 69 per cent of all employees (excluding full-time students) were unionised.

Progress is still needed for Sweden to reach **target 10.4 (adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies and progressively achieve greater equality)**, as indicators show that in 2017 the top 10 per cent of income earners had a 22.3 per cent share of GDP, with the bottom 20 per cent of income earners holding an 8.3 per cent share. The income share of the bottom 20 per cent has been decreasing during the last three decades as a result of a combination of factors, such as persisting higher unemployment levels following the 1990s economic crisis in Sweden, as well as policies, implemented primarily during the 2000s, such as weakening of unemployment insurance, which were specifically aimed at decreasing the relative income of many groups in the bottom deciles.

To reach the objectives of **target 13.2 (integrate climate-change measures into national policies, strategies and planning)**, Sweden has adopted a long-term strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, fulfilling commitments under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement. The strategy is largely based on the national climate policy framework and climate policy action plan. The climate policy framework's long-term goal is to have zero net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2045 at the latest and thereafter achieve negative emissions. By 2045, greenhouse gas emissions from Sweden are to be at least 85 per cent lower than emissions in 1990.

Trade unions report that Sweden is meeting its obligations under **target 16.10 (protect fundamental freedoms)**, as there is open access to labour courts and availability of legal aid. There are only incidental physical attacks on union members, and discrimination against trade union members is rare. Other impediments to activities, membership of trade unions or workers are deemed incidental and rare.

TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

To ensure an SDG-led recovery and resilience from the crisis, trade unions urge the Swedish government to:

- Develop and strengthen the Swedish labour market model to deal with the emerging major challenges and achieve SDG 8. The model, based on respect for party autonomy, has already given good results on many of the sub-goals that SDG 8 covers, such as protection of workers' rights, higher productivity and decent working conditions.
- Contribute knowledge to encourage and establish formal structures for social dialogue and tripartism. The Global Deal Partnership, a Swedish initiative which promotes the distribution of the globalised economy in a more equal way, is an important step in this direction.
- Support the development of trade union capacity in other countries, including through development cooperation projects. Aim at mutual learning and the development of context-bound structures so that trade union activities can realise decent working conditions at the national level.
- Deepen work with the ILO, which is the main platform for promoting international cooperation for sustainable economic development and decent working conditions.



The Swedish Trade Union Confederation



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