

# SWEDEN

0.95% GENUINE AID/GNI

1.04% TOTAL AID/GNI



International aid must develop as the world changes, and today's big issues have to do with democracy and the rule of law. Will nationalism win, or will human rights and democracy? We will continue to develop our work on democracy, not least in Europe. I will put forward proposals for how to focus our policy even more on democracy. There will also be more focus on climate and environment, where the issue now is not just about transition but also about adapting to a much harsher reality in many places."

Peter Eriksson, Minister for International Development Cooperation, January 2019

## MAIN CHANGES IN 2018

The first half of 2018 was characterised by the campaign ahead of Sweden's general election. International development was not high on the political agenda, and apart from climate change and migration, few global issues were debated.

After the election there were protracted negotiations to form a government. For four months, the previous government remained as interim, without formulating new policies. This affected the development cooperation budget, which was adopted without specific allocations to different sectors, regions or themes. Policy development temporarily stalled, making it a slow period for policy initiatives around, for example, the Feminist Foreign Policy, the 2030 Agenda action plan and policy coherence for sustainable development.

## TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS FOR 2019 AND BEYOND

With the new year, a government was formed by the Social Democrats and the Green Party. This was made possible by a 73-point budget agreement between the government, the Centre Party and the Liberals. This includes development cooperation (confirmation of the 1% ODA/GNI target and more focus on democracy support). A 'drive for democracy' has since been announced by the government.

In the adjusted budget, the government increased in-donor refugee costs reported as ODA by 700 million Swedish Krona (around €70 million), leading to that amount being deducted from the development cooperation budget. As previously, transparency on in-donor costs was lacking. According to media comments from the Minister for International Development Cooperation, a new calculation model for in-donor refugee costs was agreed by February. This was not made public, and instead more money than anticipated was taken from development cooperation. Some information was published in the budget proposal in September 2019, but still without enough transparency to verify the amount counted as ODA.

In May 2019, the OECD DAC published a positive peer review of Sweden, applauding its consistently generous ODA levels, effective development cooperation, leadership on peace and conflict prevention, environmental sustainability and gender equality, and strong focus on leaving no one behind. More critical recommendations included improving synergies between its wide variety of strategies (country, regional and thematic), using country budgets and systems more, ensuring adequate staffing, and continuing to develop its work on the nexus of conflict, humanitarian and long-term development support.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT

- Continue to fulfil the target of 1% ODA/GNI and promote conversation on development cooperation focused on relevance and choice of strategies to prevent superficial debates on cutting ODA levels.
- Commit to phasing out in-donor refugee costs from ODA in the long term, and while still counted as ODA, urgently publish the full details of the calculation model for improved transparency and accountability, and reconsider the recent decision to add new types of in-donor costs to ODA.
- Develop plans for the 'drive for democracy' in Swedish development cooperation through an inclusive process with local and Swedish CSOs and other actors for democracy.
- Maintain a strong human rights and poverty eradication perspective in negotiations on ODA in the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework. Resist political proposals attempting to use ODA to implement EU migration and security policies.

SWEDEN - GENUINE AND INFLATED AID  
(€ million, constant 2016)

