

# SDG 4 in the 2030 Agenda

SSNC Position paper

## 4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Swedish Society  
for Nature Conservation



## Preface

In September 2015, the world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which for the first time tie together the ambitions of social, economic and environmentally sustainable development. The uniqueness of the Global Goals is also that they are universal. This means that the countries' commitments to achieve the Goals should both happen at home and at the global level. The Swedish government has announced that Sweden will be a leader in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This ambition is excellent but also requires lots of commitments. Despite the progress that has been made globally over the last decades, the world is facing major challenges, not the least in the environmental field. The government has also announced that the 2030 Agenda work will be linked to Sweden's coherence policy, formulated in the bill on Shared Responsibility – Sweden's policy for global development. This puts high demands on cooperation and integration between the various policy areas.

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) welcomes the Global Goals as a comprehensive and ambitious policy framework for the world's overall sustainability and development work. The 17 Goals and 169 Targets create a common challenge for all of us to work with, with 2030 in sight.

The role of SSNC in the work with the 2030 Agenda will take place both on the global, national and local levels. Several of our partner organisations around the world contribute in various ways to the work with the Global Goals, something which we will support and collaborate around.

In Sweden, the SSNC wants to both contribute by mobilizing and motivating the people's movement to work with the Goals in the local context, but also by influencing the government to take the role as a leader in the transition. The SSNC has therefore produced position papers for seven of the Global Goals, as well as for the cross-cutting issue of harmful chemicals, all of which have clear connections to the organization's work. The purpose of the position papers is to show how the SSNC relate to the Goals, but also to highlight aspects that we consider to be of particular importance to achieve the Goals.



## 1 Introduction

### **"Ensuring an inclusive and equivalent education of good quality and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."**

Goal 4 aims to ensure that all people get a good education. Education is one of our basic human rights and is also fundamental for a healthy society. Education is also an effective way of fighting poverty, promoting gender equality, improving our health and, not least, preparing for the changes we face in the world.

Sweden has a well-developed education system for children, young people and adults. Compulsory school is mandatory for ages 6-15 and almost all students continue to upper secondary school – both compulsory and upper secondary school are free of charge.

70 % of the adult population participates in education of some sort in a 12-month period. In a global perspective, Sweden performs well in terms of goal achievement of Goal 4 in the 2030 Agenda. However, statistics are missing in Sweden, as in most countries, to follow up on Target 4.7.

The Goal is to ensure that all students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to promote a sustainable development.

Sustainable development is well described in the Swedish curriculum for compulsory school, the leisure-time centre and pre-school class. However, there are no follow-ups on how Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is being implemented. Many students are at risk of graduating with very poor knowledge about sustainable development.

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation believes that Sweden's commitment to the 2030 Agenda can give ESD a well-needed push within the Swedish school system. For several years, the SSNC has carried out various activities with the aim of accelerating the implementation of ESD, primarily in compulsory and upper secondary school. The work is done in collaboration with municipalities, universities, other civil society organizations, business and through various school development projects.

Through the Nature Conservation Society's different projects and activities related to ESD, we can see that there are significant differences between schools. It is often the efforts and involvement of individual teachers that make the difference in how ESD is implemented. That is far from satisfying. All students have the right to develop knowledge and skills to promote a sustainable development – that is what the world's leaders have agreed on.

Here, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation presents a Position Paper on Goal 4, which focuses entirely on Target 4.7.

## 2. Target 4.7: Education for Sustainable Development

***In the systematic review "Sustainable development in schools - we need to hurry up!" from 2017, <sup>1</sup> the SSNC emphasizes the need for mapping and follow-ups on how Swedish schools meet the learning objectives related to ESD in the national education policies.***

In several surveys, municipalities, principals and teachers ask for more training and support related to ESD. <sup>1, 2</sup>

Swedish and international ESD-researchers believe that the school's organizational framework for pedagogical work is a crucial prerequisite in order for the students to absorb the knowledge and skills they need to be able to promote sustainable development. This is in accordance with the SSNC's experiences of school development projects in collaboration with the municipalities of Malmö and Lund.

Currently, there is no national monitoring on how the schools actually implement ESD or if the national ESD goals are achieved, and there are no such directives from the Government or the Ministry of Education and Research. The National Agency for Education and the Swedish School's Inspectorate have not taken any initiatives to follow up how schools implement ESD either.

What is not measured or reviewed by the Swedish School's Inspectorate is at risk of getting a lower priority in the hectic everyday life in schools. Sweden's follow-up of the 2030 Agenda can therefore get a great practical importance for the implementation of ESD in Sweden. Statistics Sweden (SCB), is the government body tasked with adapting the global indicators to measure the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda into a Swedish context.

The global indicator for following up on Target 4.7 reads:

4.7.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in: (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment

"Education for global citizenship", as it is mentioned above, is in our opinion already, in a Swedish educational context, included in the meaning of Education for Sustainable Development.

In a Swedish context, the indicator can be translated into:

***Extent to which education and learning for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in:***

***(a+b) national education policies including national curricula***

***(c) teacher education***

***(d) student learning assessment***

***(e) the systematic quality work in schools***

What is central in the indicator for Target 4.7 is the monitoring of how well sustainable development is an integral part of all levels of education. In order to find out on how this is carried out in Swedish schools, the so-called systematic quality work of the schools, should be added to the national monitoring of Target 4.7.

The systematic quality work is monitored when the Swedish School's Inspectorate make an auditing visit at a school. The global indicator divides national education policies and curricula. In Sweden, the national education policy and curricula

are partly integrated with each other, and therefore parts a + b can be merged.

A method for monitoring and evaluating how all universities include sustainable development was led by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) in 2017, assigned by the Government. Thereby, there is an existing method to use to continuously follow up on how sustainable development is included in teacher education. (Level (c) of the indicator for Target 4.7).

It is well known that schools and principals are required to manage a large amount of documentation. Therefore, it is important that the follow-up of the indicator for Target 4.7 is implemented within the existing monitoring systems on several levels. For instance, by looking into how well the national tests (tests that all Swedish students take several times during their years in compulsory and upper secondary school), include knowledge and skills regarding sustainable development. (Level (d) of the indicator for Target 4.7).

### 3. SSNC's recommendations on Target 4.7



**4.7 By 2030, 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.**

In order for Target 4.7 to be implemented practically and lead to equivalent and necessary knowledge among all, we believe that the Swedish government should:

- Establish a national indicator for Target 4.7 and ensure that the authority responsible for this starts the process of developing continuous monitoring of all parts of the indicator.
- Appoint an internal coordinator at the Ministry of Education and Research for the follow-up of targets of relevance for education within the 2030 Agenda.
- Follow the recommendations in the Swedish Higher Education Authority's (UKÄ) review of the academic institutions' efforts to promote sustainable development. It is particularly important to change the Higher Education Act so that it clarifies that all teacher students should receive the knowledge and practicality skills necessary for ESD.
- Assign UKÄ the task to follow up on the 2017 inspection of the academies and report on part c) of indicator 4.7.1.
- Assign UKÄ the task to ensure that all principal educations provide skills and tools to promote ESD.
- Initiate a change in the Education Act (2010:800) so that it includes the writing that all school-related activities should promote the students' "understanding of the conditions for a sustainable development" in accordance with the Higher Education Act (1992:1434 § 5).
- Assign the Swedish National Agency for Education the task to prepare a so-called commentary material on ESD. Assign the Swedish National Agency for Education the task to include the 2030 Agenda in the "general advice for systematic quality work".
- In consultation with the National Agency for Education, ensure resources for further ESD teacher training and more digital teaching modules on ESD.

- Provide the Swedish Agency for Youth and Society (MUCF) with funds to promote youth-driven learning activities for sustainable development.
- Ensure that the ongoing digitalization of Sweden's schools is linked to how digitalization can contribute to a sustainable development.

**Prioritizing ESD on all levels in the Swedish education system also contributes to the fulfillment of other targets in the 2030 Agenda, for instance Target 12.8 and 13.3.**

12.8 By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.

13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

## Footnotes

Reports referred to are written in Swedish only.

1. Rapport: Hållbar utveckling i skolan – vi måste snabba på  
[www.naturskyddsforeningen.se/sites/default/files/dokument-media/lhu\\_rapport\\_2017\\_0.pdf](http://www.naturskyddsforeningen.se/sites/default/files/dokument-media/lhu_rapport_2017_0.pdf)

2. Skolverkets kunskapsöversikt över arbetet med lärande för hållbar utveckling i skolväsendet  
[www.swedesd.uu.se/digitalAssets/719/c\\_719092-l\\_3-k\\_kunskapso-versikt-agenda-2030.pdf](http://www.swedesd.uu.se/digitalAssets/719/c_719092-l_3-k_kunskapso-versikt-agenda-2030.pdf)

Konsumentverket (2017) Skolans undervisning för miljömässigt hållbar konsumtion – Resultat från en kvantitativ studie med lärare, Konsumentverkets webbsida 2018-01-31

[www.konsumentverket.se/for-larare/kunskapsbanken/undervisning-for-hallbar-konsumtion/](http://www.konsumentverket.se/for-larare/kunskapsbanken/undervisning-for-hallbar-konsumtion/)

Håll Sverige Rent – Lärarbarometer 2017

[www.hsr.se/sites/default/files/lararbarometern2017-weblink.pdf](http://www.hsr.se/sites/default/files/lararbarometern2017-weblink.pdf)

Read more about SSNC schoolwork:

[www.naturskyddsforeningen.se/education](http://www.naturskyddsforeningen.se/education)

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation is a non-profit environmental organization with the power to bring about change. We spread knowledge, map out environmental threats, and propose solutions and influence politicians and authorities, both nationally and internationally. We work democratically with about 50 organizations in about 20 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. We also participate in various networks globally and within the EU.

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