THE STATE OF NATIONAL URBAN POLICY IN SWEDEN

Current national urban policy

Sweden does not have a national urban policy, but it does have several national initiatives that focus on urban development. Chief among them is the National Platform for Sustainable Urban Development, which was launched in 2014. It is co-ordinated by the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (Boverket), with the involvement of the Swedish Energy Agency (Energimyndigheten), the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Naturvårdsverket), the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) and the Swedish Transport Administration (Trafikverket). One of the aims of the Platform is to increase co-operation, co-ordination and sharing of knowledge and experience among players in different sectors and at different levels regarding sustainable urban development. One area of focus includes how to improve co-ordination between sectors. The Platform also supports efforts for sustainable urban development within the regional structural fund programmes. The Platform is an ongoing assignment with no end date (Boverket, 2015; OECD, 2015).

Other national urban initiatives include the National Negotiation on Housing and Infrastructure, which seeks to build the first high-speed railway for trains between Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. The government has also announced plans for public transport-related investments to improve urban environments (“urban environment agreements”), which are currently being prepared by the government offices. Finally, the national government supports municipalities in their efforts to combat segregation, and
provides grants to increase and facilitate refurbishment and energy efficiency in apartment buildings in vulnerable residential areas (OECD, 2015).

The Ministry for the Environment and Energy oversees urban development. The role includes co-ordinating sustainable urban development within the government. Responsibility for grants within the area of housing, planning and building; and laws and regulations concerning planning and construction, as well as regional policy is handled by the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation.

Sweden’s regional policy, Sweden’s National Strategy for Sustainable Regional Growth and Attractiveness, released in 2015, will be used as a framework to guide investment. The Strategy provides a policy framework for the development of all regions in Sweden, and focuses on investing in enabling factors utilising a place-based approach. The national strategy for regional growth provides a framework for investing in regions including urban areas. The national policy goal for regional development is to develop the potential in all parts of the country with stronger local and regional competitiveness (Government of Sweden, 2015).

Previous national urban policy and developments

The Storstadspolitiken Program, between 1998 and 2010, was a support programme joining the national level and local level governments, aimed at the integration of immigrant populations and increasing economic activity in deprived areas. From 2008 to 2010, the national government implemented a national strategy for integration. One major aim of this strategy was the minimisation of exclusion in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2015).

Bibliography


