

# Bilateral environmental and climate cooperation with strategic countries, funded by allocation 1:13

Annual report for 2020

---

REPORT 7006 | JULY 2021



# Bilateral environmental and climate cooperation with strategic countries, funded by allocation 1:13

Annual report for 2020

Editors: Hanna Roos and Petter Mahrs

THE SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION AGENCY

**Order**

Phone: + 46 (0)8-505 933 40

E-mail: [natur@cm.se](mailto:natur@cm.se)

Address: Arkitektkopia AB, Box 110 93, SE-161 11 Bromma, Sweden

Internet: [www.naturvardsverket.se/om-oss/publikationer](http://www.naturvardsverket.se/om-oss/publikationer)

**The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency**

Phone: + 46 (0)10-698 10 00

E-mail: [registrator@naturvardsverket.se](mailto:registrator@naturvardsverket.se)

Address: Naturvårdsverket, SE-106 48 Stockholm, Sweden

Internet: [www.naturvardsverket.se](http://www.naturvardsverket.se)

ISBN 978-91-620-7006-9

ISSN 0282-7298

© Naturvårdsverket 2021

Print: Arkitektkopia AB, Bromma 2021

Cover photos: Mario Hagen, Pixabay



# Foreword

Sweden needs to engage in international cooperation on the environment and climate to achieve its environmental objectives, to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Agenda 2030 and to meet the objectives of international environmental and climate conventions.

In this report the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Swedish EPA) presents environmental and climate cooperation with strategic countries, regions, and partner agencies, funded by a specific allocation of government funding for environmental cooperation with countries and regions that have a significant impact on environment and climate. Other agencies participating in bilateral cooperation in addition to the Swedish EPA are the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, the Swedish Chemicals Agency, and the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI). Cooperation between strategic countries and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and Stockholm Environment Institute are also funded by this government allocation. Employees at the Swedish EPA and their counterparts at other relevant agencies and organisations participate in many more forms of international cooperation than those described here. This report only covers cooperation funded by this allocation.

Sweden has used the allocated funds to engage with partner countries to explore how the climate impacts societies and people and what countries can do to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. There has also been a focus on marine spatial planning, transport-efficient communities, waste prevention and development of national chemicals legislation. In 2020, the Swedish agencies have worked in cooperation with Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, India, Indonesia, China, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, USA, and Vietnam. Activities also took place in cooperation with the Arctic Council, Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The Swedish government agencies are contributing to activities of significant importance to promote sustainable development and to support environmental and climate efforts – both at home and around the world. Cooperation is based on openness, patience, and a long-term approach. The corona pandemic has contributed to the digital transition, with new methods and platforms for meetings and knowledge exchange. The quick transition to digital ways of working has come with both challenges and opportunities to development. Now, we have better capacity to work in a more travel free manner – even though physical meetings are still an important part of the projects for understanding local conditions.

The work of the Swedish EPA and of our counterparts in Sweden and around the world is making a difference. This specific government funding came about in 2013, and since then, we have seen that strengthened environmental authorities, improved legislation and effective implementation are key to reaching the environmental objectives in Sweden – limited climate change, improved quality of the environment and a more sustainable world.

Stockholm, May 2021  
Björn Risinger  
Director General

# Content

<b>Foreword</b>	3
<b>Background</b>	5
<b>Bilateral cooperation in 2020</b>	6
Argentina	6
Brazil	7
Colombia	10
India	13
Indonesia	14
China	14
Russia	17
South Africa	19
South Korea	22
Taiwan	22
Thailand	23
USA	23
Vietnam	25
<b>Regional, multilateral and thematic cooperation</b>	27
Arctic Council	27
Barents Euro-Arctic Council	28
Water quality modelling for the BRIICS countries	29
Intensified chemicals and waste work	29
Leadership Group for Industry Transition	30
The Nordic Council of Ministers	31
Western Indian Ocean	32
Council of the Baltic Sea States	33
<b>Sector-specific results</b>	34
Equality, gender equality and human rights	34
Reduced environmental impact and increased digitalisation	36
Export-promoting projects	38
Special challenges during the coronavirus pandemic	39
<b>Annual report for 2020</b>	42

# Background

In this report the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Swedish EPA) describes the environmental and climate cooperation with strategic countries that was funded by 1:13 - the government allocation for bilateral environmental cooperation in 2020.

The Swedish EPA, the Swedish Chemicals Agency, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management and the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI) work with environmental and climate-related issues together with countries that have a significant impact on the global environment and climate. Furthermore, the agencies work with countries that are strategically important for global environmental and climate initiatives and through strategically important organisations, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the Stockholm Environment Institute.

The Government's letter of appropriation for the Swedish EPA for 2020 states that the funds may be used for government agency bilateral environmental and climate cooperation with countries that have a significant impact on the global environment. They may also be used for cooperation with countries that have strategic importance in global environmental and climate cooperation. In the Spring Amending Budget for 2020, the funding was increased from SEK 29.4 million in 2019 to SEK 34.4 million in 2020. The additional SEK 5 million was provided for bilateral cooperation regarding chemicals and waste.

Programmes funded by 1:13 primarily contribute to achieving the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs), Sweden's environmental quality objectives and the generational goal. Many of them also promote equality and help to increase the export of Swedish products and Swedish expertise.

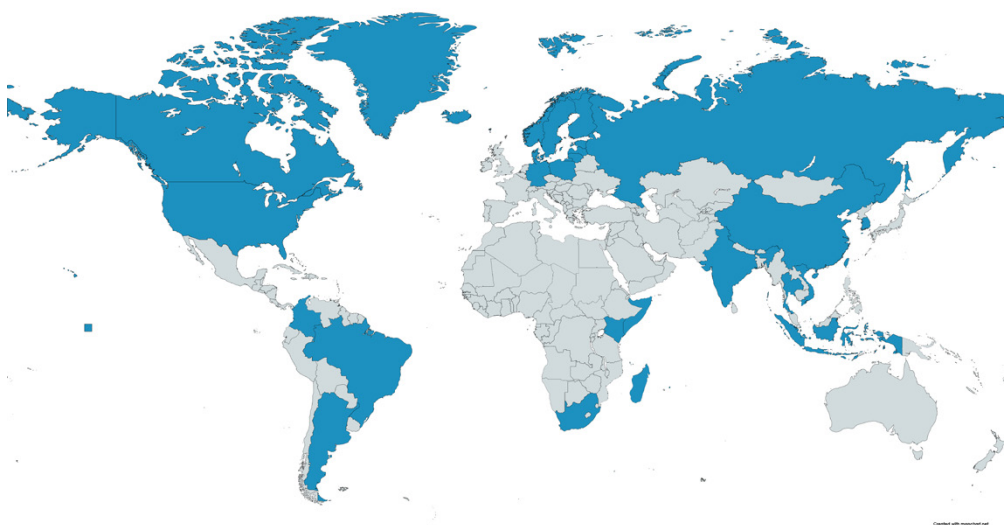
Today's environmental challenges are largely transnational and cannot be solved solely within Sweden's borders. For example, the major economies of Brazil, Russia, India, Indonesia, China and South Africa (BRIICS) have vast manufacturing industries that supply products both for domestic consumption and for the global market. These populous countries have a massive impact on the use of global resources and environmental performance and are therefore important actors in terms of global environmental and climate cooperation. The Swedish agencies have also collaborated with other countries of relevance to their respective missions, and through multilateral bodies such as the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), the Nordic Council of Ministers, UNESCO, Helcom and the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

The Swedish EPA manages the funds and determines how they should be allocated between agencies and organisations. The Swedish EPA also consults on a regular basis with the other government agencies and organisations involved on matters of allocation, assessment and development of the funding.

Thanks to a great deal of flexibility and excellent capacity for digitalisation, the partnerships have been able to continue despite the ongoing pandemic.

# Bilateral cooperation in 2020

Partners participating in the Swedish EPA's bilateral activities are countries, regions and collaborative bodies of significant strategic importance for global environmental and climate efforts. In 2020, our main partners were Argentina, Brazil, China, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, the USA and Vietnam. The agency also works within the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China), and with countries around the Western Indian Ocean.



Partner countries and regions (in blue) where bilateral or multilateral projects were carried out in 2020. Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland (including Åland), Canada, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia and USA are members of the Arctic Council. Finland (including Åland), Norway, Sweden and Russia are members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Estonia, Finland (including Åland), Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden and Germany are members of the Council of the Baltic Sea States. Somalia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, the Comoros and South Africa are part of the Western Indian Ocean collaboration.



## Argentina

### Swedish Chemicals Agency

The Swedish Chemicals Agency is working with Argentina on the development of chemicals legislation for the country. The agency's primary partners are the Argentinian Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development under the President, and the National Food Safety and Quality Service. No activities were carried out in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. However, ongoing contacts within the partnerships have continued. Proposals for new collaboration projects have been discussed and planning has begun for joint activities to be carried out in 2021.





## Brazil

### Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

The cooperation between the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management and Brazil in the area of species and marine conservation with a focus on the Brazilian La Plata dolphin was completed in 2020. The project contributed to a better understanding of the conservation status and protection needs of the La Plata dolphin, and the results of the project have been shared at federal state level and at international scientific conferences. The findings will be used to inform future decisions on management measures for this endangered species.

**The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management has started a new collaboration with Unesco Chair for Ocean Sustainability.**

Brazil is in an initial phase in developing marine spatial planning. The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management is working with the Interministerial Commission on Marine Resources (CIRM). The planned sharing of data and information for marine spatial planning could not take place due to travel restrictions and the cooperation was largely put on hold for the whole of 2020. However, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management maintained contacts and dialogue, including on a pilot project for marine spatial planning in Brazil's three most southern federal states which the interministerial commission plans to carry out. During the year, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management worked with the Swedish embassy in Brasilia to launch a new partnership with the UNESCO Chair for Ocean Sustainability at the University of São Paulo and took part in a webinar on the blue economy – i.e. the activity relating to the marine environment such as fishing, fish farming, tourism and marine transport. This work resulted in a plan for the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, the embassy and other Swedish agencies operating in Brazil (the Swedish EPA, SMHI and the Swedish Chemicals Agency) to carry out a project together in 2021 during marine week – Semana do Mar – in collaboration with UNESCO.





## Swedish Chemicals Agency

In Brazil, the Swedish Chemicals Agency works with the environment agency and the Stockholm Convention Regional Centre in the state of São Paulo. São Paulo is the most industrialised and most populous state in Brazil. The purpose of the collaboration is to support São Paulo's efforts to develop its preventive chemicals control system in the hope of also driving development at the federal level. The activities are linked to the Minamata, Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions, among others.

In 2020, the Swedish Chemicals Agency was supposed to take part in a training programme organised by the federal environmental agency, but none of the activities planned for the year were able to take place because of the coronavirus pandemic. However, ongoing contacts have been maintained with cooperation partners to enable planning, and in 2021 the agency intends to participate in a seminar organised by the Ministry of Health.

## Swedish EPA



The Swedish EPA has for many years worked actively to develop relationships and joint initiatives with the Brazilian Ministry of the Environment (MMA), the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) and several other actors in the private, academic and municipal sectors. The main focus of the cooperation is sustainable waste management and initiatives are currently under way in the areas of municipal waste planning and prevention of food waste and marine litter. During the year, there were several changes of direction, primarily due to the pandemic, that prevented many of the project's activities from being carried out. The programmes that were able to be delivered focused on municipal waste planning and the prevention of food waste.

During 2020, several random sample analysis tests were planned in São Paulo, where waste at a site would be selected at random and the contents categorised. This would have provided the basis for methodological development and training. All random sample analysis had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, but preparatory activities were able to be carried out. During the year, a manual was produced in Portuguese for random sampling of household waste with a focus on the whole of Brazil. With the completion of the training material, a number of smaller training sessions have also been held digitally in Brazil. At the end of the year, the Swedish EPA and a number of Swedish and Brazilian actors took part in a webinar on the prevention of food waste as part of the Swedish Innovation Weeks that are held in partnership with the Swedish Embassy in the capital Brasília.

Brazilian law requires all local authorities in Brazil to develop a waste management plan, but so far very few have actually done so. The Swedish EPA is leading a national course in municipal waste planning with the aim of sharing know-how and tools. The participants are also taught how to act as trainers for their colleagues (*train the trainer* principle). Due to the pandemic, only one of the three planned courses was delivered in 2020; the remaining courses will be carried out in 2021 or when the pandemic allows.



## SMHI

In Brazil, SMHI works on issues affecting air quality and climate. SMHI works with Fortaleza municipality in the state of Ceará on green infrastructure in tropical cities, focusing on reducing so called heat stress and on adapting towns and cities to climate change. The projects provide greater understanding of how the design of a tropical city affects the heat stress and the air pollution to which its residents are exposed. Together with the local authorities in Fortaleza, SMHI has discussed priorities and opportunities for the towns and cities to factor expected effects on air quality into their planning. The cooperation on air quality should have started in 2020, but cuts in the budget for 2020 and the pandemic have delayed the formal launch. SMHI has a PhD student at the University of Ceará who is linked to the project.

Within the climate programmes, there has been a shift to digital events during the year. This was a challenge, mainly because access to technical capacity, connectivity and platforms is limited in some countries and for some communities. Together with universities in Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, a two-part digital workshop was organised on regional climate challenges and access to data for young researchers from Central and South America. With the support of SMHI and professors at the partner universities, the participants will continue to collaborate on publications on serious local and regional climate challenges with major societal impact.



# Colombia

## SMHI

In Colombia, SMHI works with the environmental agencies, industry and universities in the Cali region within the state of Valle del Cauca on the emission of particles and black carbon and their effect on air quality. The programme has previously received support from national and international experts in the field. Colombia has new and relatively ambitious laws regulating fine particles. In 2020, several in-person seminars were scheduled to take place in the Cali region to discuss the initial results of SMHI's modelling of fine particles and black carbon in Valle del Cauca. Due to the pandemic, these were cancelled, and virtual meetings were held later in the year.

SMHI's findings revealed that the sugar cane industry is a major cause of fine particles and black carbon in the area. They are produced both by the factories that refine the sugar and from the burning of sugar cane that is carried out in parts of the fields before the sugar canes are harvested. A dialogue was held with representatives of the sugar cane sector, and at the end of 2020 and early 2021 they supplied a more detailed picture of the sector's emissions. The aim is to present a more accurate model simulation in the first half of 2021 to conclude the bilateral cooperation in the region. The bilateral cooperation with Colombia on urban air quality is due to end in 2021.

**Through the work of SMHI it has been discovered that the sugar cane industry has a significant negative impact on the air quality in Cali. A dialogue has started with actors in the sugar cane industry to discuss solutions to the issue.**







**CIRCLE2**  
URBANISE  
THE NEW PEBUNGAN  
READY TO MOVE IN 2014  
START @ 9 HD  
02 652 9999  
www.circle2group.com

สนใจโฆษณา  
081-638-1551  
086-376-1522

CENTAR  
INTERCARE GROUP







## India

The Swedish EPA has been working in partnership with the environmental organisation Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) since 2012, training officials from environmental agencies at state level throughout India who work in environmental management and control.

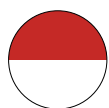
The purpose of the collaboration is to provide Swedish environmental expertise in areas such as oversight, air pollution, waste management and reducing industrial emission, to help increase competence among Indian environmental officials, ultimately leading to more efficient environmental work and a better environment. The Swedish EPA's contribution to the training courses is expected to be widely disseminated to a relevant target group.

Before the pandemic, EPA staff travelled to India to take part in a training course for environmental officers on the planning of measures to improve air quality in cities. Four complementary lectures were held digitally by lecturers from the Swedish EPA, the Swedish Energy Agency and Malmö Municipality. During the trip, contact-building meetings were held with national and regional administrations, civil society organisations and the Swedish Embassy and Business Sweden in Delhi. The Swedish EPA also provided pre-recorded lectures for two web-based training courses – one on developing air quality plans for industrial areas and one on environmental assessments.

During the year, an evaluation of the 2012–2018 collaboration between the Swedish EPA and CSE was carried out and many important lessons were drawn. The evaluation shows that in a number of specific cases the lessons from the programmes were able to be applied in environmental work. For example, officials report that they have been able to improve their procedures for overseeing environmentally hazardous activities and that they can now develop and implement action plans more effectively. Many have also shared their lessons with their managers and team members. A discussion has begun with CSE on the next steps, including action to be taken on the basis of the evaluation.

In the context of activities with India funded by the bilateral cooperation allocation, new needs have been identified, giving rise to activities outside the scope of the allocation. In 2020, for example, an information pack on the treatment of contaminated land was developed. The information pack will be launched in 2021.

**Thanks to the cooperation between the Swedish EPA and the environmental organisation Centre for Science and Environment, environmental officials in India have improved their procedures for overseeing environmentally hazardous activities and their implementations of action plans.**



## Indonesia

### Swedish Chemicals Agency

The Swedish Chemicals Agency supports Indonesia's Ministry of Environment and Forestry with regard to the continued development of the law and implementation of environmental conventions. In 2020, the agency contributed funding for the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury through its support for the organisation BanToxics. BanToxics supports governments and civil society, particularly in Asia, on issues relating to the phasing out of mercury, not least within small-scale gold mining operations. In Indonesia, the organisation works centrally with the ministry of environment as well as with regional authorities in the Central Kalimantan region in Borneo. Despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic situation, a working group has been set up and training delivered to employees in the regional agencies. Areas of the law in need of change have also been identified in cooperation with the ministry of environment. The cooperation has also involved regular contact between the Swedish Chemicals Agency and the Indonesian Ministry of Environment to ensure that the government is prioritising the implementation of the Minamata Convention.



## China

### Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management's bilateral cooperation with China in 2020 was mainly in the form of participation in the China Europe Water Platform (CEWP). The purpose of the platform is to promote research collaboration, policy dialogue and business cooperation between China and the EU in a number of water-related thematic focus areas. There are three strands to the agency's work within the CEWP: leading a project on water and energy, leading the work on integrated water and marine management, and taking part in a trade-promoting initiative within CEWP and contributing to trade-promoting activities between Sweden and China within the water sector.

Several activities were planned during the year but had to be put forward to 2021 because of the pandemic. These include the platform's high-level meeting and two workshops on sustainable hydroelectric power and source-to-sea in China, a Chinese delegation visit to the Nordic countries and a number of projects in connection with World Water Week 2020.



### Swedish Chemicals Agency

Chemicals control in China is split between several actors. In 2019, with support from the Swedish embassy in Beijing, the Swedish Chemicals Agency initiated contact with relevant potential partner agencies. This has resulted in very strong interest from the Chinese Ministry of Industry and Information Technology in working together on development of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) and its use in China. As per the Ministry's



request, the plan was to create a joint working group to discuss issues relating to the GHS, mainly with regard to oversight. However, the coronavirus pandemic has made it hard to initiate new contacts so the work in China has been put on hold until it is possible to travel again and renew contacts, especially with the Ministry for Industry and Information Technology.



## Swedish EPA

The Swedish EPA carries out programmes in China in four areas: the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED)

- climate with a focus on emissions trading and industrial transition
- circular economy
- efficient use of resources

The Swedish EPA is the point of contact for Sweden's participation in the CCICED. The Council is a strategic platform for Sweden's environmental policy dialogue and collaboration with China. In 2020, the Swedish EPA continued its participation in the Council's policy group on sustainable consumption and production. The work was carried out in close collaboration with the Stockholm Environment Institute and the Swedish embassy in Beijing. The group's policy recommendations featured prominently in the Council's joint recommendations to the Chinese government in 2020, as input for China's new Five-Year Plan (2021–2025) that will provide the basis for the country's development.

China is the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases and in 2019 the country introduced a national system for emissions trading. The Swedish EPA has conducted dialogue with the relevant actors in China, including through a digital workshop with the ministry of environment's climate centre, with the aim of identifying cooperation partners for a future partnership with China on matters relating to emissions trading.

As a major manufacturer and consumer of plastic, China is a key player in the global efforts to promote a circular economy and make more efficient use of resources, to limit the impact of plastic use on the environment and climate and to minimise marine waste. In 2020, the Swedish EPA investigated the possibility of entering into a bilateral partnership with China in the area of plastics based on a collaboration between IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute and a number of leading Chinese organisations. The aim would be to prevent and reduce the discharge of microplastics from wastewater treatment plants and textile industries into Chinese seas. The collaboration has received funding from the Swedish EPA's 2020 call for international cooperation projects to reduce marine plastic.

**Recommendations from the Council's policy group on sustainable consumption and production in China, in which the Swedish EPA participates, have been lifted by the Chinese government as input for China's new Five-Year Plan.**

## SMHI

SMHI hosts the Cordex international project office for regional climate modelling which supports the development of climate models and projections of future climate and promotes cooperation between different regions and countries. Through Cordex's office in Asia, SMHI works with relevant stakeholders within several disciplines and in several regions. In November 2020, a capacity-building workshop was arranged with a regional consortium for integrated sustainability research at Beijing university. This resulted in an agreement to set up a framework for a more formal collaboration, including a pilot project to show the benefits of working together. Later the same month, a second workshop was held to discuss the local and regional challenges in south-east Asia and how Cordex data can be used. In the interests of sharing knowledge and experience between regions and countries, this was attended by one of SMHI's collaboration partners from South Africa who reported on a tool for analysing regional climate information. More workshops are planned and the cooperation on capacity-building measures is expected to continue.





## Russia



### Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management works with the Russian ministry of environment on marine spatial planning and coordinated management from source to sea. Activities within both these areas were planned in connection with the Baltic Sea Days 2020 conference. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the conference was postponed until 2021. In the bilateral working group on marine environment and water management, only one digital meeting was held in 2020, where a revised schedule was drawn up with some new projects on public education on marine spatial planning, and mapping of old shipwrecks in the Gulf of Finland. The schedule is expected to be formally adopted at Baltic Sea Days 2021.

The cooperation on marine spatial planning and environmental assessment is mainly focused on the exchange of experience between relevant agencies. The sharing of experience between the participating Baltic Sea states has contributed to a better understanding of how ecologically sustainable marine spatial planning should be formulated. During the year, planning and dialogue meetings were held online to discuss the Swedish tool for assessing cumulative environmental impact, known as Symphony. As a result, Russian agencies have expressed increased interest in building their own data program based on Symphony. A special seminar on the tool is planned to be held digitally as part of Baltic Sea Days 2021. A digital dialogue meeting with Russia's hydrological research institute in St. Petersburg has also been held in order to plan and begin the collection of available data on the current environmental situation in the Gulf of Finland and the Russian rivers that empty into it.

At the request of the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute and a Russian partner conducted a source-to-sea study in the Luga River system in autumn 2019. The results of the study were to have formed the basis for a number of activities in 2020, but these were cancelled due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, the study has contributed to an increased awareness among the relevant Russian authorities of the environmental issues that need to be addressed in order to reduce discharges into the Baltic Sea of phosphorus and nitrogen as well as certain environmentally hazardous substances.

**With support from the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, Russian authorities have gained increased awareness on how discharges into the Baltic Sea of phosphorus and nitrogen as well as certain environmentally hazardous substances can be reduced.**

### Swedish EPA

The Russian ministry of environment is the Swedish EPA's primary cooperation partner in Russia. The following five areas are central to the partnership:

- water and marine environment
- nature conservation and biological diversity
- air pollution control and climate change
- environmental protection and best available techniques (BAT)
- waste, chemicals and sustainable urban development.





During 2020, work continued on activities within a number of areas. Although the coronavirus pandemic restricted the capacity to carry out the activities and hold physical meetings with cooperation partners, the work has largely continued as before, albeit in digital form.



Within the cooperation on air and climate, a revised project synopsis has been produced and accepted by all the main parties. A key success has been the involvement in the project of the Russian Ministry of Economic Development, which is responsible for climate control mechanisms and the national “Clean Air” project. Within the scope of the project a dialogue has been initiated concerning potential collaboration with the cities of Krasnoyarsk and Lipetsk. These are two of Russia’s twelve most polluted cities and are part of the national clean air project, a project which, if successful, will be rolled out to other cities across the country.



Finally, renewed efforts have been made to resume cooperation with Moscow in a project on energy efficiency in buildings – with an exchange of information and the hope of a seminar in early 2021. In the area of waste, several meetings were organised in 2020 between the Swedish EPA, the project manager in Perm and the Volgograd and Nizhny Novgorod regions, focusing on waste sorting, hazardous waste management and producer responsibility. Within the area of the marine environment, collaboration with the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management continued smoothly and the Swedish EPA supported the agency in its work and dialogue with its Russian counterparts. Collaboration on best available techniques in 2020 largely took place in the form of support for so-called hot spot work, with Swedish consultants preparing and participating in the programme’s support activities, but also presenting at the Russian Clean Air and Clean Country conferences and co-authoring articles on subjects such as industrial development and the circular economy in the paper and pulp industry. Supporting activities within hot spot work will also serve as preparation for the expected permit system training in 2021.





## South Africa

### Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management



The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management works with the South African maritime and coastal management agency on joint learning and knowledge transfer in marine spatial planning, environmental monitoring and coordinated management from source to sea.



The collaboration with South Africa was formalised in 2020 through a technical agreement between the parties which is expected to be signed by the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management and its South African counterpart in 2021. The agreement will help to give greater weight and priority to cooperation on maritime issues.



As part of the knowledge exchange in the area of marine spatial planning, a number of proposals for future activities have been discussed. These are aimed at sharing experiences and creating common learning on the different marine spatial planning processes of the two countries, but also at exchanging experiences on how gender and poverty perspectives in marine spatial planning can be strengthened. In 2020, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management initiated a working group to develop a regional version of the Swedish tool Symphony for cumulative environmental assessments in the Western Indian Ocean. South Africa has shown strong interest in the tool and has two representatives on the working group.

Together with SMHI, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management has developed a possible proposal for cooperation around risk-based environmental management that builds on the delivery of several workshops together with South Africa's maritime and coastal management agency. The proposal will be discussed with the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water's South African counterpart in 2021.

In 2019, a study of the management of plastic pollution was carried out. It fed into South Africa's national action programme and informed the design of a new river treatment project in the Umgeni river launched by South Africa's maritime and coastal management agency. The results of the in-depth study were to have been discussed at a workshop during World Water Week and at a fringe event during the 2020 UN Ocean Conference. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, a digital source-to-sea workshop was held in March 2021 together with the Stockholm International Water Institute, where the findings of the study were presented and discussed.

### Swedish Chemicals Agency

The Swedish Chemicals Agency's cooperation with South Africa is aimed at promoting continued development of a national chemicals strategy, and development and application of a chemicals law. It also aims to support the implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS). The activities are also contributing to work being done under the Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata Conventions. Since responsibility for managing chemicals in South Africa is shared across several governmental departments, coordination is necessary to develop an overarching chemicals strategy. Cooperation is mainly taking place between the agency and the South African departments of Employment and Labour, and Environment, Forestry and Fisheries.

In early 2020, regular digital planning meetings were held with the Department for Employment and Labour with the intention of scheduling several training courses in South Africa over the year to support the implementation of GHS. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the planned activities in South Africa had to be cancelled and planning was carried out for future activities instead. The Swedish Chemicals Agency maintained regular contact with its South African cooperation partners during 2020.



## Swedish EPA

The Swedish EPA has been working with South Africa in the area of waste management with a focus on hazardous waste since 2015. The agency's cooperation partner is the Department for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. In spring 2020, a high-level meeting was scheduled with Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and the South African president within the Binational Commission between Sweden and South Africa (BNC). However, the meeting had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. The meeting of the environmental committee planned for March was able to be held digitally in early December 2020, with the participation of all agencies in Sweden that work with South Africa on environment and climate. A memorandum of understanding for environmental and climate cooperation will be signed by the relevant city councils in the two countries.

South Africa does not have an organised collection of hazardous waste from households. A pilot project in Buffalo City, a municipality that includes East London, is a first attempt to organise a trial collection there. Depending on the results, the pilot may provide the basis for a large-scale collection across the whole municipality and act as an example for other municipalities in South Africa. The launch of the project was planned for 2020 but had to be put back to 2021 because of the pandemic. The project has been managed entirely digitally over the year, with

close contacts between the parties involved. The focus has been on preparations for the collection, such as information material, an awareness-raising campaign, training of the workers who will be handling the hazardous waste and of the drivers who will be transporting it.

## SMHI



SMHI works with South Africa to increase knowledge about air pollution in Africa. The purpose of the work is to improve understanding of the connection between emissions and high levels of airborne pollutants in the areas around Johannesburg and Pretoria. Cooperation with the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research has continued to develop at a slow pace in 2020. One aspect of the planned technical cooperation is based on access to emissions data from industrial activity in the region. Getting this access has proven to be a slow process, but the issue was raised between Sweden and South Africa in the environment committee in December 2020 and this will hopefully lead to an opening. SMHI and its South African partners are engaged in an initiative to develop capacity in African countries for predicting air pollution. Some of the work on this initiative also came to a halt, due to the pandemic.

SMHI collaborates with various actors in several areas of water management in South Africa. For example, SMHI provides technical support through two management tools for source-to-sea calculations: a local tool adapted to the Umgeni river and its environs and a national tool that assists with large-scale planning and assessment. This tool is now available to support the decision-making processes of the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and is openly accessible on SMHI's website<sup>1</sup>. SMHI also works with the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management on plastic waste and risk-based monitoring in South Africa.

Africa is particularly challenging when it comes to digital cooperation due to personal and institutional constraints in terms of technical resources. Despite the challenges, there have been many smaller online meetings within the Cordex collaboration with those who have the means, and a larger digital workshop was arranged where we brought together groups from southern Africa and south-east Africa to extend cooperation within the region. This is a first step on the way to establishing a larger network in southern/south-east Africa with a focus on the effects on the climate with different degrees of global warming and the impact of weather phenomena such as El Nino.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://hypeweb.smhi.se/showcases/south-africa/>





## South Korea

### Swedish Chemicals Agency

South Korea has relatively recently adopted new legislation governing chemicals and biocide products. These laws are largely consistent with the EU legislation in this area. The primary aim of the cooperation between the Swedish Chemicals Agency and the South Korean Ministry of Environment is therefore to provide support for the implementation of these laws and to bring in Swedish experience and expertise. In February, a delegation from South Korea visited the Swedish Chemicals Agency, which shared experience on matters such as substitution, public procurement and contacts with industry as control mechanisms for risk reduction.

The deputy director of the chemical products and biocides division of the Ministry of Environment has been awarded a scholarship to study Swedish policy and work in the field of chemicals. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, she is currently studying for a Masters in Political Science at Stockholm University, but she plans to carry out her workplace internship at the Swedish Chemicals Agency. The aim of studying EU law and the Swedish implementation of the rules is to present a report to the Korean government with proposals for improving preventative chemicals work in South Korea. Over the course of the year, the Swedish Chemicals Agency has provided certain support in preparation for her internship.

### SMHI

Through the Cordex office in Asia, SMHI works within several disciplines with relevant stakeholders in South Korea. The activities carried out in the country are aimed at establishing a cooperation programme between Cordex, SMHI and South Korean and regional cooperation partners.



## Taiwan

### Swedish Chemicals Agency

The Swedish Chemicals Agency works in cooperation with Taiwan which, in recent years, has developed a chemicals law and set up its Toxic and Chemical Substances Bureau (TCSB). The bureau wants to improve its routines and processes in connection with the new law, and has identified a need to boost its expertise in the areas of oversight, risk assessment and biocides. A workshop on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) was planned for May 2020, but had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Instead, the TCSB conducted its own workshop on the subject of GHS, with support from the Swedish Chemicals Agency, which took part for two days via a video link and shared experience about the introduction and oversight of GHS. The plan is to continue the collaboration in 2021 with more in-depth information about GHS for inspectors.



## Thailand

### Swedish Chemicals Agency

Thailand is often held up among countries in south-east Asia as a nation with a good system of chemicals control. In order to find out why Thailand is seen as a good example and how the Thai authorities and government work, an analysis of Thai chemicals legislation was carried out in autumn 2020 with the aim of identifying success factors and difficulties. The study was carried out by a Thai consultancy firm, UAE, as a literature study and through interviews with relevant agencies, departments, civil society organisations and industry representatives.

Results and learnings from Thailand will be used to develop the Swedish Chemicals Agency's work for strategic development with other countries in the region.

### SMHI

SMHI works with relevant stakeholders in Thailand through the Cordex office in Asia. The activities carried out in the region are aimed at establishing a cooperation programme between Cordex, SMHI and Thai and regional cooperation partners.



## USA

### Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water's cooperation with US partners, primarily in California, continued remotely in 2020. As the work in the collaboration areas of previous years (maritime regulation, marine spatial planning, conservation and environmental assessment) has been put on hold due to the situation of both parties during the year, a new collaboration has been initiated to explore how the sea's natural history can help future ecosystem-based management.

The cooperation involves Sweden's Geological Survey, the Rise research institute and the University of Gothenburg, and on the US side several American research institutes and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

A joint digital workshop was carried out in 2020 with actors in California, USA, and other cooperation partners both in Sweden and the USA. The final report of a preliminary study was delivered by Rise in January 2021 and describes the benefits and opportunities of a future major investment in management-applied research within maritime history. The focal point of the cooperation was an exchange of experience with NOAA, and further dialogue with the US on possible ways forward is planned for early 2021.





## Swedish EPA

The Swedish EPA is working in cooperation with the USA in two areas: a transport-efficient society and emissions trading systems. The agency is collaborating with the state of California on emissions trading and control mechanisms. The collaboration is very important for the Swedish EPA's own work on regulatory development. Contact was resumed in 2020 between the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to discuss emissions trading and the parties have identified several specific areas of collaboration, including emissions reporting and control, industrial transition and bioenergy. Working groups for the various areas are to be formed and discussions within the groups are scheduled to start in spring 2021. In the area of transport, work in 2020 focused on re-establishing a network after previous contacts left, and finishing the report on mapping political control mechanisms for transport efficiency in Sweden and California that was started in 2019.



## Vietnam

### Swedish Chemicals Agency

The Swedish Chemicals Agency's cooperation with Vietnam's chemicals agency is primarily aimed at supporting the agency with the development and practical implementation of the country's chemicals legislation. In 2020, the cooperation with Vietnam was carried out in digital form. A planned workshop on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) for inspectors in the southern part of the country had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, but will be resumed as soon as circumstances allow. In 2020, the Swedish Chemicals Agency supported their Vietnamese counterparts in their work on the circular economy and the Minamata Convention on Mercury. The design process of a digital introductory training course on GHS for customs officers began and is scheduled for delivery in the first half of 2021. In addition, check-in meetings with general discussions on chemicals control have been carried out virtually, about once a month during the year. There are plans for a Swedish expert to be stationed in Vietnam for longer in 2021.

### SMHI

As in several other Asian countries, SMHI works with relevant stakeholders in Vietnam through the Cordex office in Asia. The activities carried out in the region are aimed at establishing a cooperation programme between Cordex, SMHI and Vietnamese and regional cooperation partners.







# Regional, multilateral and thematic cooperation



## Arctic Council

### Swedish EPA

Through the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, Sweden has been supporting the Arctic Council's work on eliminating environmental pollutants since 2010. The Swedish EPA participates in four of the programme's expert groups and leads the group that works on persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and mercury. In 2020, the group arranged a workshop on mercury with the aim of sharing knowledge and highlighting best practice examples, as well as preparing communication materials ahead of the upcoming ministerial meeting in 2021. The workshop was followed up with a web article on the need for more coordinated and effective measures against mercury pollutants.

For several years, the Swedish EPA has provided specific support to the expert group for the Indigenous Peoples' Contaminant Action Programme and has been pushing for the increased involvement of the Saami Council in the group. The aim of these efforts is to strengthen the continued work on the clean-up of illegal waste dumps on the Kola Peninsula and the implementation of the Circumpolar Local Environmental Observer (CLEO) Network and also to prepare for longer-term participation in the expert group's action programme. The work in 2020 resulted, among other things, in a total of 96 tonnes of waste being cleaned up in the Russian part of Sápmi.



The Swedish EPA also contributes to the Arctic Council's working group for environment monitoring and assessment, and the working group for conservation of Arctic flora and fauna. Through climate modelling for the Arctic, Sweden has contributed to a report and a summary for decision-makers with recommendations for action, monitoring, and areas where there are knowledge gaps. The main work of the programme for the conservation of Arctic flora and fauna is focused on the implementation of a number of recommendations, drawn up in 2013, for how the member states and the permanent members should work together to conserve Arctic biodiversity. In 2020, the action plan for this work was carried out. The new plan will be harmonised with other relevant international processes, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Through its participation in the steering group for the Arctic Council's Project Support Instrument, the Swedish EPA is also contributing to a long-term and harmonised funding mechanism for action projects in the Arctic which links project development both to the Arctic Council's priority areas and to specialist expertise within expert groups, as well as the developing methodological expertise and capacity at various levels.



## Barents Euro-Arctic Council

The Barents region is severely affected by climate change, biodiversity loss and various pollution sources. These challenges demand an international response where the states concerned (Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia) work together through the Working Group on Environment of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and its subgroups. The Swedish EPA participates in the cooperation together with the Ministry of the Environment and the administrative boards of Norrbotten and Västerbotten counties.

The BEAC's Working Group on Environment (WGE) focuses on developing environmental administration and legislation, identifying investment opportunities and supporting projects for dealing with the environmental problems of the Barents region. This work includes climate-promoting measures, sustainable tourism, biological diversity and environmental measures in particularly polluted areas (hot spots). It also necessitates collaboration between the countries' regional authorities, with Västerbotten and Norrbotten participating on behalf of Sweden. In 2020, chairmanship of the working group passed to Finland. A large proportion of its work is carried out in two subgroups in which the Swedish EPA participates.

Since 2010, Sweden has invested in programmes that link the hot spot work to ongoing internal processes in Russia with the aim of introducing updated legislation for a permit system for environmentally hazardous industrial activities linked to the principle of best available techniques (BAT). This link was deepened and given structure under Sweden's chairmanship of the WGE (2017–2020). Prior to Finland's chairmanship of the WGE (2020–2023), Sweden through its Environmental Protection Agency had been entrusted with supporting Finland within this area. It carried out the role well during 2020 and the previously achieved results were not only maintained, but strengthened and expanded.



Within the Subgroup on Nature and Water, work has continued on sustainable tourism, watercourse restoration, biological diversity and climate, where a revised climate plan for the BEAC's working groups is being developed. Work on invasive species has been carried out in the form of two projects in cooperation with the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. A project on watercourse restoration was organised and documentation produced.

Nine meetings of the Hot Spot Group were held, including two with regional Russian authorities, as well as 18 Task Force meetings. At the meeting of environment ministers in Luleå in February, four hot spots, or particularly severe sources of pollution, were removed from the BEAC's hot spot list. During the year, efforts continued to support and develop the thematic expert groups comprising independent experts from all member countries, that were formed under the Swedish chairmanship. The purpose of the expert groups is to provide advice and support and to review environmental reports linked to the hot spot work. Overall, the work has gone well and the transition to a digital way of working has been relatively smooth.



## Water quality modelling for the BRIICS countries

SMHI's Hydrological Predictions for the Environment (HYPE) tool is used for forecasting and for warning services, as well as for assessing and reporting on water quality. In 2020, SMHI organised an international Hype modelling course. The course was held online in September 2020 with 26 participants from 16 countries, including the BRIICS countries of Brazil, Russia, India, Indonesia, China and South Africa. Around 30 per cent of the training course participants were women.



## Intensified chemicals and waste work

In the spring budget in June 2020, the Swedish EPA received additional funding for the purpose of stepping up its bilateral chemicals and waste work. The government agencies covered by the funding began preparations for new or intensified programmes for delivery in 2021, while the increase in 2020 was mostly used for four grants, where the work on issues and the contacts that are created are relevant for the bilateral cooperation.

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) received support for an e-learning course in waste management and the circular economy. The course will fulfil an important function within the Swedish EPA's current and future collaboration with strategic countries on waste-related matters. The course is also expected to be spread among a wider target group with the help of UNITAR's network.

The Swedish Chemicals Agency also initiated a partnership with UNITAR in 2020, which received support for the development of an e-learning course in

preventative chemicals control. The course is based on the guidance document produced by the Swedish Chemicals Agency and will also be available for other countries. These types of initiatives help to build new contacts and provide support for future work and are seen as strategically important in terms of digitalising parts of the activity in an effective way.

The Swedish Waste Management Association has received a grant to translate the Nordic pictogram system for waste management into several languages, and for work on documenting challenges in waste management cooperation in countries of importance for the bilateral cooperation.

The secretariat for the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions has received funding to produce a series of short videos with the title *Twenty voices in twenty years*, which explore the convention's history and the successes that have been achieved over the years and will be a way of raising further awareness of the convention. The videos will be launched during the convention's 20-year anniversary in 2022 and are expected to have a ripple effect by inspiring other countries to sign up to the convention.

The International Chemical Secretariat, ChemSec, has received support to update and increase the sustainability ranking ChemScore for the world's biggest chemicals producers. The project includes data gathering and compilation for updating existing rankings and an expansion of the total scope to 50 producers. Companies are ranked on the basis of their work on reducing the production of harmful chemicals. The grant expands the evidence base to include companies' work on the circular economy.

## Leadership Group for Industry Transition



The Leadership Group for Industry Transition, LeadIT, was launched by the governments of Sweden and India at the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019. LeadIT brings together 13 countries and 16 companies that are committed to the Paris Agreement and to achieving net zero carbon emissions from industry by 2050. LeadIT is recognised as an important initiative within the transition of heavy industry, and the only formal initiative under the UN's climate convention which also includes countries. The initiative is very important for the momentum that has been built up around the phasing out of fossil fuels and the transition to renewable energy sources within heavy industry.

The Stockholm Environment Institute leads the Group's secretariat, which is responsible for the work of the platform. During the year, LeadIT launched a website and an "Industry Transition Tracker", which presents data on national strategies that relate to industry. In 2020, two statements were communicated: one at ministerial level stating that member states should ensure a green recovery and industrial transformation, and one on the occasion of the Group's December summit which underlined its commitment to exploring policy and financial measures for industrial transition.



As part of this partnership, the Stockholm Environment Institute has co-funded a study on the opportunities for and barriers to industrial transition in Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa. The institute has also initiated discussions with South Korea on potential cooperation regarding the country's opportunities for industrial transition.



## The Nordic Council of Ministers

Representatives of Nordic youth organisations participate in the international process for developing new biodiversity targets. The youth representatives will contribute with documents for the member states' Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) which takes place in autumn 2021. The youth representatives will also take part in the climate conference (COP26) within the UN's climate convention to be held at the end of 2021.



Despite the pandemic, activities contributing in various ways to the development of the project have been carried out on an ongoing basis during 2020. Some have been a direct part of the project, and some a result of the project.



In autumn, a webinar was held with an intergenerational dialogue between young people, Denmark's environment minister, representatives from the Nordic Council and the Nordic Youth Council. The webinar was the third to be held as part of the project, and dealt with the loss of biological diversity and political engagement for a more sustainable planet. An additional event based on intergenerational dialogue was carried out in December of the same year.



As part of the general mobilisation and engagement of young people, establishing a Nordic branch of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network had long been seen

as desirable. This was finally agreed in October 2020, when the Nordic Biodiversity Youth Network was created by a number of the actors involved in the project's youth advisory group. The steering group has been extended to include three youth representatives in order to get young people more involved in the project and to strengthen their ownership of it. The three members, who come from Denmark, Sweden and Finland, have been involved in the work for a long time.

## Western Indian Ocean



During 2020, the bilateral funding enabled the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management to include the growth economies of the Seychelles, Mauritius and South Africa in the Sida-funded programme launched by the agency in 2019, which focuses on long-term, sustainable marine management to reduce poverty in developing countries in East Africa.

Within the Western Indian Ocean, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management has developed effective cooperation over the year focusing on the marine environment and marine spatial planning. Several countries along the coast of East Africa have launched their own processes for marine spatial planning that require coordination at the regional level in order to set fair priorities for the use of the ocean. Sweden has valuable experience to contribute from ongoing Swedish marine spatial planning, and also benefits from lessons learnt in other countries.

From a regional perspective, it is important to include the region's growth nations, not least because of their higher capacity and driving role within the region. By combining the Sida programme with the bilateral cooperation funding, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management can contribute to regional marine environment cooperation for both developing and growth nations, while also using the government funding more efficiently. Within the project, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management works with several Swedish universities that provide valuable technical support and data analysis. In 2020, programmes were launched with the region's growth nations, building on a start-up workshop with the Nairobi Convention. In particular, a project was initiated under the Nairobi Convention to develop a tool for the environmental assessment of multi-source impacts that can interact to form cumulative impacts. An initial workshop was held digitally.

This has resulted in regional engagement and the opportunity to build capacity within marine environment management, where bilateral cooperation is combined with the sharing of information between the region's developing and growth nations. There is now well-established cooperation with regional organs (IOC), an international commission under UNESCO for measurements and observations of the state of the world's oceans and any changes, and the Nairobi Convention. Important exchanges have already been carried out, including a successful training programme with the Seychelles and Somalia. Activity-planning work has helped to raise the quality of many of the Sida-funded activities.



## Council of the Baltic Sea States

The Council of the Baltic Sea States is working with Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and local partners on the Baltic 2030 vision. The activities in 2020 focused on increasing the synergies for the implementation of the global sustainable development goals in the Baltic Sea Region and strengthening the Russian actors' capacity and Russia's engagement within the Baltic Sea Region's cooperation. The joint sustainability work and cooperation between the EU's strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the strategy for north-west Russia within the Baltic Sea Region create an overall approach that promotes long-term results.

The coronavirus pandemic affected the initiatives and activities that were planned for 2020. There was much greater use of web-based seminars and conferences, but many of the planned activities had to be cancelled. The Council of the Baltic Sea States worked hard to restructure the activities and hold them online as far as possible, aware that a certain degree of face-to-face networking is important for building relationships and trust. To fill the gaps in networks hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic during the year, it has been essential to highlight the importance of continued cooperation on topics such as the sustainable development goals, climate action and sustainable maritime economy, as well as the exchange of knowledge and experience in these areas.

Despite the challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic, several activities were able to take place during the year. An analysis of *Baltic 2030 Bumps on the Road*, a report on the most challenging sustainable development goals for the Baltic Sea Region, was initiated in 2020. Within the goal 'Decent work and economic growth', issues relating to gender and the age gap are analysed and options for further supporting greater equality in the Baltic Sea Region, including Russia, discussed. Due to the pandemic, the report is scheduled to be completed and published in 2021.

In 2020, the Council of the Baltic Sea States published a guide – *Localising sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the Baltic Sea region* – which will provide a basis for communication, awareness and capacity-building of the local authorities' and local actors' role in taking concrete action to support Agenda 2030, and to promote sustainability from various perspectives.

The Council of the Baltic Sea States co-organised the Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. A workshop on the theme of a common path to sustainability for the Baltic Sea Region resulted in two recommendations: to recognise the sustainable development goals as a common task for all countries in the Baltic Sea Region, and to launch the joint action plan for sustainability in the Baltic Sea Region. The Council also coordinated several events during the Forum Strategov, focusing on youth participation and the importance of regional cooperation in the implementation of the global goals within the Russian Federation. Experience gained from the work on localising the global goals in the Baltic Sea Region was highlighted.

# Sector-specific results

## Equality, gender equality and human rights

Sweden pursues a feminist foreign policy which also includes our international environmental cooperation. Gender equality has to be integrated into the issues addressed in order for environmental and climate initiatives to be effective.

The activities funded by the bilateral cooperation funding have in some cases embraced a clear gender equality perspective, for example in focus areas such as access to clean water or the different ways that women and men are exposed to toxins and emissions. This perspective is also present in how communities are planned and designed and how this affects the way in which men and women move around an urban environment – on foot, by bike, on public transport or by car. The partnerships are also helping to raise the status of indigenous peoples in environmental issues so that their knowledge and observations can provide valuable input to the work against climate change.

In their cooperation activities, the government agencies are aiming to achieve a better gender balance among participants and speakers at seminars, conferences and on field trips, and in project working groups. This can be viewed as an important first step, especially in countries where gender equality is not considered an important issue. With this in mind, there is a need for ongoing skills development in the area of gender equality and further development of strategies to include the gender equality aspect in every stage of Sweden's project work with partner countries.





## Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

In its collaborations in China, the USA and the Western Indian Ocean, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management has focused on ensuring a gender balance among invited participants, speakers and researchers at the various activities it has organised. In its cooperation with Russia, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management seeks to give a stronger voice to young female experts. Participating Russian agencies are continuously encouraged at seminars and at planning and expert meetings to give younger female experts the opportunity to take part as well as greater opportunities to learn more about source-to-sea management.

The management of marine plastic waste in South Africa's river systems emphasises the need to build partnerships and share experiences with the communities living along the rivers. In its future dialogues, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management will also highlight the need to include a gender equality perspective. Creating joint learning on gender and poverty issues in marine spatial planning is a new area of cooperation that may become relevant in the coming years. The South African state apparatus is still evolving in terms of opportunities and rights for all population groups in the country. Our intervention should contribute to strengthening the role of the state apparatus and thus indirectly supporting opportunities for all sections of the community.

**The management of marine plastic waste in South Africa's river systems is being developed in dialogue with local communities living along the rivers.**

## Swedish Chemicals Agency

Chemicals control is linked to human rights issues, for example in connection with the right to information. This is something that also affects the opportunity to enjoy a good working environment. Equal protection of all people in society is something that should be factored into chemicals risk assessments and into regulations.

## SMHI

Polluted air and heat stress in socio-economically vulnerable areas are likely to have a particularly negative effect on women and children. Better information about air quality in such areas is therefore extremely valuable in work that aims to reduce the negative health effects caused by pollution and heat stress.

Safe access to clean water is important for sustainable social development and has a particularly strong impact on women's health, safety, education, earning opportunities and family relations. SMHI is actively encouraging women to take part in courses on the use of SMHI's modelling tool Hype and ensures a gender balance both among the participants and teachers on the course.

SMHI strives to be democratic and inclusive, to reduce inequality and ensure that as many societal groups as possible are represented. SMHI attempts to ensure balance in terms of gender, levels of disability, ethnicity and geographical background. It is sometimes a challenge to reach out to and engage certain groups, for example indigenous people in certain regions. SMHI is consciously working on improving this.



## Swedish EPA

The Swedish EPA's cooperation projects with South Africa take gender equality into account, including during in-depth interviews to assess households' knowledge of hazardous waste and how it is managed.

The Swedish EPA included gender equality aspects in its work on policy recommendations for sustainable production and consumption within the Chinese Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED).

The transport-efficient society mapping exercise that was carried out as part of the collaboration with California includes a specific gender analysis which, among other things, shines a light on the different travel habits of men and women. In the projects relating to nature conservation and environmental protection (permit system) in Russia, the public right to environmental information and to have a say are considered to be integral components that strengthen human rights. The permit system project also touches on indigenous issues to some extent. Within the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, indigenous people were represented in environmental groups where they can safeguard their interests and make their voices heard. The Barents cooperation thus makes an indirect contribution towards equality, gender equality and human rights.

## Reduced environmental impact and increased digitalisation

The agencies that receive funding for international environmental cooperation strive to reduce the environmental impact of their activities, for example by progressively changing their own working practices, working more digitally and travelling less.

### Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

The coronavirus pandemic has brought into focus the need to shift to travel-free working methods to reduce the impact on the environment and is likely to lead to greater prioritisation of digital working in the coming years. Only seven per cent of the total planned travel budget for 2020 was used. Virtually no scheduled trips were carried out in 2020, especially not long-haul journeys. The resources have largely been reallocated and spent on organising digital meetings and workshops wherever possible. In cases where the benefits of face-to-face meetings are particularly great in terms of the opportunities they provide for building relationships and networks, the meetings have been postponed.

**Only 7 per cent of the total planned travel budget for 2020 was used when all projects became digital.**

### Swedish Chemicals Agency

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic forced a more rapid move towards digitalisation than would probably otherwise have been the case. No travel was undertaken

during the year. The pandemic aside, the Swedish Chemicals Agency strives to ensure that any travel is well justified, can be coordinated within a region whenever possible and is made as sustainable as possible by using the least environmentally harmful travel option.

## SMHI

All projects relating to air quality aim to provide greater knowledge on sources of air pollution that can be used by local agencies to reduce environmental and health impacts. The heat-wave project aims to understand how green infrastructure can be used to reduce the impact of heat waves, which also has a positive impact on the environment. Last year's work on digital meetings has provided a better insight into how digital meetings can be carried out, both at SMHI and in recipient countries.

Because SMHI operates globally, the agency is used to having to hold meetings digitally. During the coronavirus pandemic, video meetings completely replaced face-to-face meetings, although this caused some difficulties as a certain level of training is required to ensure successful connection between the participants. Because internet connections and technical platforms are in short supply in some regions, digital collaboration is not always easy, but SMHI has carried out a preliminary analysis of what works in different countries and regions and has found ways of collaborating online and offline.

## Swedish EPA

Within all projects in the various collaboration arrangements, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency endeavours to limit the environmental impact of its projects, for example by holding travel-free meetings, seminars and workshops via various digital meeting platforms. In 2020, however, the coronavirus pandemic meant that basically all meetings were held in digital form. Within the Arctic Council most meetings were held digitally, and now that experts have gained more experience, virtual meetings have become a matter of course. In January 2020, however, the Swedish EPA travelled to China. This was planned so that activities within several different areas could be carried out during the same visit, and all collaboration activities after that were carried out digitally.

The programme in Russia has been working to digitalise its operations for some time. One unexpected effect of the pandemic was that online meetings that were previously impeded by different security standards and complicated procedures suddenly became commonplace and were arranged with different organisations and at all levels.

Between 2012 and 2019, field trips were carried out on an annual basis from India to Sweden. These trips have a relatively high environmental impact due to the emissions caused by travel, and also a high cost. Following discussion with CSE, it was decided to reduce the frequency of the field trips to once every two or three years. However, evaluations carried out after the visits show that these trips are very valuable, so they will not be completely discontinued.

**Before the pandemic there were some oppositions in holding meetings digitally, but during the pandemic digital meetings became a matter of course.**

## Export-promoting projects

Bilateral cooperation programmes that receive government funding must be in line with Sweden's overall export strategy. Swedish businesses benefit when we can show how technical abilities combined with policy instruments and legislation facilitate the development of innovative environmental technology.

### Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

Export promotion is a central part of the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management's cooperation with China as this is a central aspect of the China Europe Water Platform (CEWP). The cooperation contributes to improved opportunities for business exchanges between relevant private stakeholders from China and Sweden in the water sector. Initiatives have included participation in the process of developing a plan for business promotion activities in 2021. The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management has also maintained a close dialogue with several export promoters in Sweden, such as IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute, to enable and facilitate their participation in the platform's promotion activities.

In Russia, experience of Symphony, the Swedish tool for cumulative environmental assessment, has to some extent contributed to an increased demand for Swedish expertise in conducting aquatic environmental surveys in order for Russia to meet its national goals of reducing the discharge of pollutants into Russian rivers. The development of WIO Symphony, based on the Swedish Symphony, as part of the Western Indian Ocean partnership, also has an export-promoting aspect. However, no economically significant exports are expected.

### Swedish Chemicals Agency

Exports have been indirectly affected through the Swedish Chemicals Agency's cooperation activities, as stricter requirements regarding reducing the use of harmful substances led to a need to replace these, either with alternative substances or with different technical solutions. Sweden and Swedish companies have in many cases already made this transition and can therefore offer solutions. Trade is also promoted through the harmonisation of classification and labelling of hazardous chemicals.

### SMHI

The clean air projects provide capacity development and an introduction to Swedish environmental technology in the recipient countries. SMHI has recognised that this can lead to further cooperation in joint consulting and research projects.

Tools and methods for water management that are tested and implemented by SMHI can be used in consultancy work and capacity development in many countries. By testing tools in different countries and climates, SMHI can improve and adapt them to different environments.



By passing on Swedish expertise, making climate information produced in Sweden available and sharing methods, tools and examples of best practice, SMHI contributes to the high level of trust that the outside world often has in Sweden when it comes to environmental issues. The fact that Sweden is also a known source of funding and supplier of climate information to developing countries and others is underlined by SMHI's work.

## Swedish EPA

The bilateral and multilateral partnerships of the Swedish EPA contribute directly and indirectly to Sweden's export promotion objectives in a number of ways. Sharing Swedish experience and methods can create interest in and awareness of Swedish expertise and environmental and climate technology. Close dialogue with Sweden's embassies in partner countries and interfaces with other relevant Swedish actors further strengthen this work. In Sweden's cooperation with China, for example, partners are exposed to Swedish experience and knowledge within areas such as industry, waste management and biogas production. In Brazil, interest in and demand for Swedish expertise and technology is being created through the contacts with various organisations at various levels of Brazilian society. This has also contributed to the initiation of cooperation with other Swedish actors such as RISE and IVL.

There are strong synergies in the Russian cooperation with a number of different areas within Swedish environmental and climate technology. These synergies also link to the agency's participation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. Important areas for potential export synergies include cleaning technology for air and water, energy saving, waste management and material recycling. We are also seeing demand for forestry and conservation-related services such as tourism and recreation. Active participation in activities relating to best available techniques and the value of this as a basis for a permit system within various sectors has contributed to maintaining the positive reputation in Russia of the Swedish system and technical capability.

The Arctic cooperation can also promote exports in much the same way as that reported for Russia and the Barents, and in a more prestigious context.

**Active participation in activities relating to best available techniques is promoting Swedish environmental technology and its positive reputation in Russia, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Council.**

## Special challenges during the coronavirus pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic has brought about a major shift within the programmes that receive funding for international environmental cooperation. Since spring 2020, virtually all travel has been cancelled and working practices have been adapted to become digital. Other programmes have been delayed as a result of the pandemic.

## Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

For all bilateral cooperation, the pandemic has resulted in the cancellation of scheduled face-to-face meetings or, in cases where the benefits of face-to-face meetings in terms of relationship and network building outweigh the disadvantages, face-to-

face meetings have been postponed. In several cases, meetings have been replaced by digital check-ins and digital workshops to maintain contacts and dialogue on deeper cooperation. The pandemic has emphasised the need to move to travel-free working to reduce environmental impact and is likely to mean changed priorities in the coming years. Resources have largely been reallocated and spent on organising digital meetings, workshops and webinars wherever possible.

## Swedish Chemicals Agency

The coronavirus pandemic prevented travel even early on in the year. Instead, work was carried out by telephone or email and by arranging online seminars. Several seminars and training courses had to be switched to a digital format. In most cases, this meant that projects were reduced in scope. In China, the agency has suspended its work until it is possible to resume face-to-face meetings.

The agency's experience has been that the transition to working more digitally is smoother in countries with well-established contacts. In Vietnam, for example, the suspended programmes have meant closer contact than before, with monthly check-ins and discussions of problems and needs via Teams, which has also led to a better understanding of their work. Although the pandemic has caused a lot of problems, it has also led to deeper contacts.

The coronavirus pandemic also resulted in the development of a digital training package by the Swedish Chemicals Agency and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) for broad use within the agency's cooperation activities. However, the agency believes that although digital contacts are a good complement, they are no substitute for the face-to-face meetings in Sweden or in the partner countries – contacts that are invaluable in order to gain a broader understanding of cooperation partners and their situation, and thereby be better able to contribute to chemicals control.

**Although the coronavirus pandemic has posed many challenges, it has also led to improved contact between the Swedish Chemicals Agency and established partners.**



## Swedish EPA

Within the cooperation with Russia, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Council, the ability to carry out the activities and hold physical meetings with partners was affected, but the work has largely continued as before, albeit in digital form. Although much of the work has been done digitally in the past, seminars, workshops and meetings have now had to be taken entirely online. The transition has been facilitated, among other things, by simultaneous interpretation on Zoom.

In Brazil, activities have been carried out digitally in the projects where this was possible. Activities that require physical participation have been postponed due to the pandemic.

For projects in India, no travel was carried out after March; meetings and regular contacts were carried out digitally, and some activities were cancelled. Plans for visits in Indian states under a programme designed for the states have been postponed. Plans for the development of a virtual field trip have also been put on hold.

Regarding the work in China, the pandemic has led many Chinese organisations to improve their capacity to participate and organise meetings and workshops digitally. However problems and glitches, primarily due to limited internet capacity, are an issue. The agency was largely able to cope with these difficulties thanks to our close cooperation with the Swedish embassy in Beijing, which allowed Chinese participants to take part in some meetings at the Swedish embassy which is better equipped.

## SMHI

The coronavirus pandemic caused a few difficulties as certain partners have problems with access and data capacity.

However, SMHI adapted its working practices wherever possible and carried out a number of workshops and activities online. Another difficulty has been keeping contacts interested and up to date despite changes in priorities, for example when lockdowns had to be imposed in South Africa to limit the spread of infection. A planned measurement campaign in Brazil, in collaboration with local partners, could not go ahead due to the pandemic. In autumn, SMHI's planned visit to its partner in Fortaleza was replaced with an online meeting.

The authors assume sole responsibility for the contents of this report, which therefore cannot be cited as representing the views of the Swedish EPA.

# Bilateral environmental and climate cooperation with strategic countries, funded by allocation 1:13

Annual report for 2020

In this report the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Swedish EPA) describes environmental and climate cooperation with strategic countries, regions and partner agencies that was funded in 2019 by an allocation of funds for international environmental cooperation (1:13). Other agencies participating in bilateral cooperation in addition to the Swedish EPA are the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, the Swedish Chemicals Agency, the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI) and the Council of the Baltic Sea States. Cooperation between strategic countries and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and Stockholm Environment Institute are also funded by this government allocation. Sweden and Swedish government agencies are contributing to activities of significant importance for sustainable development and are participating in environmental and climate efforts – both at home and around the world. During the year the Swedish EPA has worked in cooperation with Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, India, Indonesia, China, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, the USA and Vietnam. Several activities also took place within the framework of the Arctic Council, Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.



SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION AGENCY



Havs  
och Vatten  
myndigheten

