Sida

Swedish Development Cooperation
in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Towards new conditions for life

Preface

Swedish development cooperation with the new countries emerging from the former Soviet Union began in the early 1990s. There was no previous experience of a transformation of the kind facing the successor states. The transition from dictatorship to democracy and from a planned to a market economy is a slow and painful process. It requires a complete refashioning of the apparatus of central government and a mental reorientation in every sector of society.

Sweden has naturally wanted to support this process of change, given that developments to the east of us affect us in so many ways. There are the implications for our security, our environment and our economy, but there is also the fact that – as long as there have been people living in our part of the world – we have shared one another's fate. Thankfully, the period in which the Baltic Sea formed part of the iron curtain across Europe proved to be just a parenthesis in our common history.

Sida´s goal to help people to improve their living conditions is an important reason for our support. Millions of people rapidly sank into poverty when the countries changed system. Today one fifth of the of the region´s population is estimated to live below the poverty line.

Fifteen years after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the former constituent republics have become less and less like one another. The new countries are moving forward along their chosen paths and searching for solutions geared to their needs and circumstances. Sweden has adapted its development cooperation to these differing needs. We are working in a wide range of areas, and have achieved good results.

That is what this booklet attempts to show.

Klas Markensten
Head of Sida's Department for Europe

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Cover photo: Christopher Herwig

This brochure is published by Sida´s Department for Europe. Production. Facts: UNDP and The Swedish Institute of International Affairs. Additional copies can be ordered from info@sida.se or by telephone +46 8 779 96 50. Production: Blue media. Editor: Bert-Ola Gustavsson. Text: Gunnel Bergström. Translation: Martin Naylor. Design by: Stefan Lundström. Printed by: Edita Stockholm 2006. SIDA29201en.

BELARUS. Photo: Jens Olof Lasthein

KAZAKHSTAN. Photo: Christopher Herwig

Policies for change

Across eastern Europe and central Asia, a number of young nations are currently seeking to carve out their own strategies for state-building.

Along the road to an independent identity, there will need to be far-reaching system change in every sector of society. The gaps between rich and poor and between town and countryside are very wide. One serious threat to change is smouldering armed conflicts that could burst into flame.

Georgia and Belarus are two former Soviet republics which are now attempting to reduce their once heavy dependence on Russia.

In Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, the European Union's Neighbourhood Policy is giving a new direction to the process of reform. A search for closer European integration is serving as an engine for progress in these countries towards democracy and better living standards.

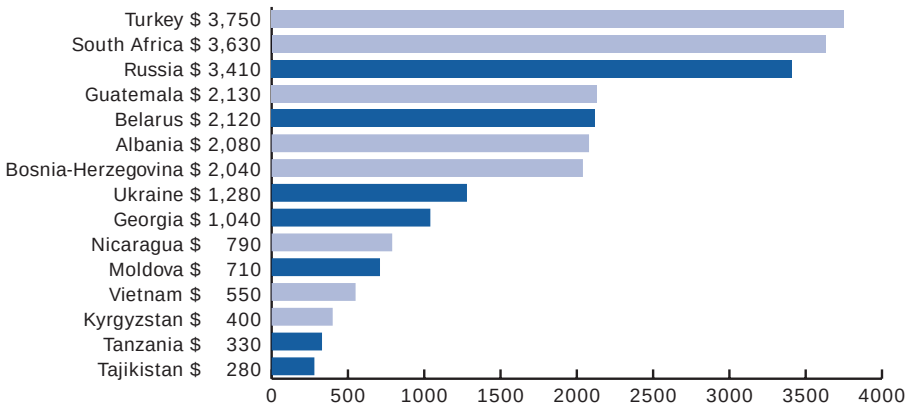
The goal of Sweden's development cooperation with eastern Europe and central Asia is to help create conditions that will enable poor people to raise their standard of living. Most of this work is being done through Sida – the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

On the following pages you will meet some of the people who are involved in making change happen in our partner countries. All the projects described are being supported by Sida and form part of a wide-ranging process of system change.

The push for change is sometimes controversial, since it affects complex systems and ingrained ways of thinking. And there are many forces that stand to gain from obstructing democratic progress.

At the end of this booklet, some experienced Sida consultants offer their personal perspectives on what working in development cooperation can entail.

Gross national income per capita in US dollars for a number of countries in 2004



In 2004 Sweden had a per capita gross national income (GNI) of $35,770. The corresponding figure for Tajikistan was $280.

MODERN TIMES. More and more supermarkets are springing up in Kaliningrad, Russia. Photo: Igor Zarembo

Three voices on democracy

An independent trade union for journalists, a reliable police service, and arrangements to make sure that everyone can cast their vote.
The processes of change which Sida is supporting in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine differ, but in all these countries the goal is the same: to strengthen democracy and freedom of expression for ordinary citizens.

TANGIBLE DEMANDS. "Stop the debate, pay us our salary!" and "Taxes according to the law!" are the calls from the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine. The Swedish Union of Journalists is helping to get the new organisation up and running.

THE WALLS OF SERGIY GUZ'S OFFICE in Kyiv are painted orange. But then they were even before the "orange revolution".

"It's my favourite colour, signalling activity and concentration," he points out.

Guz is chairman of the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine, which was set up in 2005 and now has some 1,500 members in 22 towns and cities.

"On the positive side, we have a presence in many places, and can fight for press freedom and against censorship there," he says. "On the negative side, our demands for better working conditions still go largely unheeded. Rates of pay are lousy, and what's more 70 per cent of wages are paid cash in hand."

RELIABLE. The 2006 election was the first free and fair one in Ukraine's history. Sida is supporting a reform programme aimed at strengthening democracy.

Photo: David Dahmén

ADRIAN LEBEDINSKY IS THE COMMANDER of a police district in central Chisinau in Moldova. After attending a training course on human rights, he is now passing on what he has learnt to others in the police service.

Every police station in the country has copies of a human rights booklet that is to be handed to everyone who is detained. It informs them, for example, of their right to consult a lawyer.

Lebedinsky's attitude has changed: "I used to think NGOs were a thorn in our flesh, but now I realise they're doing a serious job of work. I also view offenders differently. They're just individuals who have broken the law – I have to treat them in the same way as I would treat anyone else."

LIVING THE LESSON. Police officers are there to prevent crime, not to mess up people's lives, as often happened in the Soviet era, says District Commander Adrian Lebedinsky. Photo: David Dahmén

EVERYONE WITH THE RIGHT TO VOTE SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO SO. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is helping Ukraine to improve the electoral process for all voters, including people with a visual, mobility or hearing impairment.

"Many of Ukraine's 35,000 polling stations are not accessible to those with disabilities, but that is something we are trying to put right," says OSCE expert Mårten Ehnberg, who is based in Kyiv.

The project forms part of a major reform programme in Ukraine with funding from, among other sources, Sida, the EU and the United States. The aim is to strengthen democracy and to tackle shortcomings in the electoral system to bring it up to international standards.

Most of Sweden's SEK 5 million contribution is being used to train election commissioners and to develop a manual and a register of electors. In addition, efforts are being made to ensure that women, first-time voters and Ukrainians living abroad are better able to avail themselves of their democratic rights.

Fragile economy in Moldova

Moldova is the poorest country in Europe. Many Moldovans are still dependent for their survival on employment abroad.
"Now the country must finally be given the international support it has so long needed," says Sida consultant Rutger Palmstierna.

Moldova's economic situation remains very fragile. Lilia Razlog, head of the National Debt Department at the Ministry of Finance, lists three reasons:

- The country has no energy resources of its own. The cost of energy has skyrocketed since Russia began to charge market prices for its natural gas.
- Limited exports. As a Soviet republic, Moldova exported wine, fruit and vegetables to other parts of the Soviet Union. Russia is still an important trading partner, but not to the same extent as before, and more unpredictable. And the country has yet to gain access to the EU market.
- Moldova is unable to make full use of its human resources, even though it has plenty of highly educated citizens.

"It's good that many Moldovans living abroad are sending money home," says Razlog, «but that doesn't create a sustainable base for the future finances of the state."

IN THE 1990-S, the young, inexperienced democratic Republic of Moldova borrowed heavily. The terms were unfavourable, and for a long time the country was forced to pay high rates of interest.

The reason was that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank had classed the country as richer than it in fact was, basing their calculations on misleading statistics from the Soviet era. As a result, it had to take loans on commercial terms, which meant high interest rates.

For several years now Sida has been supporting Moldova in its debt negotiations. A Swedish expert in this area, the banker Rutger Palmstierna, is advising →

BROAD SOLUTION. Moldova's debt burden has to some extent been lifted, creating better conditions for economic development there. But there are still a lot of problems for this impoverished country to solve. Photo: Bengt af Geijerstam

HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY. "I'm trying to get to grips with our debt burden – otherwise I'll have to answer to future generations," says Lilia Razlog at Moldova's Ministry of Finance. Photo: Andrei Mardari

the Government and training a team of negotiators.

"The Moldovans have had a raw deal," he says. "The World Bank and IMF arrived at far too high a figure when they worked out the country's per capita GDP."

Interest and repayments of principal swallowed up a third of Moldova's GDP, leaving very little for investments and to maintain roads, hospitals and schools. The economy sank like a stone, ending up at developing country level. International calls for the IMF to alter the terms of the country's expensive loans grew ever stronger and helped to ensure that, in 2006, a new agreement could be signed between Moldova and the IMF. Shortly afterwards, the loans were renegotiated, resulting in lower interest rates and an extended repayment period. This took a lot of the pressure off the country, especially as Russia had raised gas prices and halted imports of its wine. Wine exports account for a third of Moldova's GDP, and previously most of them had gone to Russia.

"It's important to tackle our debt burden, not least for the sake of future generations," says Lilia Razlog. "Less debt will mean more scope for local production and investment."

THERE IS ANOTHER REASON for Moldova's economic problems: one part of the country is run by a separate government. The area in question, to the east of the river Dniester, is known as Transnistria. Within the borders of this breakaway republic are the biggest industries and a major power station. Transnistria is not pursuing the same democratic path as Moldova, and the country as a whole is unable to benefit from the resources to be found there.

TWO CURRENCIES. Moldova's currency is the leu (plural lei), while the breakaway republic of Transnistria has its own variant of the Russian rouble.

He returned with money and ideas

Between 25 and 40 per cent of Moldovans spend varying periods of time living and working abroad. Mihai Stambul, for instance, has worked in Brussels, cleaning windows and painting buildings at great heights. His wife Maria had a job as a cleaner. After just over three years they moved back to their native town of Cimislia to buy a house of their own. They even had enough money to open a café.

"Things are better in Moldova now, but taxes on small businesses are too high," says Stambul. "Jobs and housing are hard to come by, and the kids need pleasant parks to play in."

Of Cimislia's 18,000 inhabitants, around 5,000 currently live abroad. Most Moldovans go to Italy, but Spain, Russia and Israel are also common destinations.

CONTRASTS. The gap between rich and poor is increasing in the former Soviet Union. Photo: Mikael Röhr

Widespread poverty in former Soviet Union

Political, ethnic and religious conflicts are a major contributory factor behind the poverty to be found in the former Soviet republics. One person in five now has an income below the poverty line, set at $2.15 per day by the World Bank.

In Tajikistan, some 70 per cent of the population – over four million people – live below the poverty line. In Russia, the figure is around 20 per cent, or 30 million people.

Gender equality gaining ground in Georgia and Ukraine

The Women's Centre stands on a dusty slope on the outskirts of the little Georgian town of Akhaltsikhe. Its director is Marina Gachechiladze: "Really we ought to call ourselves the Equality Centre. I hope others won't make the same mistake as we did. To begin with, we made such a song and dance about women that we scared the men away," she recalls.

The centre is supported by Sida through the UNDP. A measure of its success is the fact that many men now call to sign up for various activities.

"Georgia is not without its traditions of equality. Just look at 'King Tamara', the woman who ruled the country back in the 12th century," the project's coordinator, Beka Mikautadze, points out.

The centre is involved in a range of activities, including microcredits for female farmers, new maternity and child health clinics, and computer courses.

Beka Mikautadze himself has changed since he got married and had two daughters:

"I used to think the womenfolk should stay at home. But I soon realised that my wife should have a job as well. We both need to be productive, for the sake of society and our own family."

OVERCOMING BOUNDARIES. The Women's Regional Resource Centre in Samtskhe-Javakheti is persuading men, too, to work for gender equality. Photo: Mikael Röhr

UKRAINE, TOO, has a historical female role model: Olga, a princess who ruled Kiev in the 10th century. The project "Olga and Oleg", whose aim is to integrate gender equality issues into politics, is named after her and the prince who succeeded her. Oksana Dugert, chair of Women in the Media, is the driving force behind the project, which is operating in several towns in Ukraine. In partnership with the Swedish-based Springboard Development Consultants Group, which is also involved in equality projects in Moldova, Russia, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, she is training men and women to argue the case for more women to be elected as politicians. →

DRIVING FORCE. Oksana Dugert, chair of Women in the Media, has plenty of arguments for electing more women as politicians.
Photo: David Dahmén


В`ЇЗД
24h

EQUAL PARTNERS? Fewer and fewer young men in Ukraine now expect their wives to stay at home.

Photo: David Dahmén

Over the last couple of years, researchers, teachers, officials, business people and doctors have attended seminars and paid study visits to Sweden. As part of the project, journalists are also being taught how to include an equality angle in their current affairs reporting. Participants sometimes revise their views on the very first day.

"One journalist was surprised at first that there was so much about women's football in Swedish newspapers," Dugert recalls. "But later he said: 'Why shouldn't it be just as interesting as the men's game? After all, women read papers too.'"

ONLY FIVE PER CENT of Ukraine's MPs are women. "Olga and Oleg" has a target of 15 per cent by 2007 and 30 per cent by 2015.

"A male lawyer at one seminar said that in our country men of working age die much younger than women, because of their unhealthier lifestyle. Women have a better eye for social issues, and his conclusion was that, if there were more female decision makers, they'd be able to introduce social change that would benefit the male population."

Young people in Ukraine have started to think along new lines:

"Younger men don't expect their wives to stay at home. Among the older generation, there is more prejudice to be overcome," says Oksana Dugert.

Honesty, justice, transparency

They are both in their early thirties, lawyers, and members of Georgia's Parliament. Ketty Makharashvili represents the United National Movement, while Giorgi Tsagareishvili belongs to the Right Opposition.

Although they are political opponents, they have one thing in common – they have both set up women's departments in their parties. Violence against women is still a taboo subject in Georgia, and sexual harassment tends to be brushed aside as a joke. But "good governance" is now a guiding principle of this new democracy.

Both these young politicians describe the new, professional bureaucracy using words like justice, honesty and transparency. Georgia faces a host of political, social and economic problems – problems that are compounded by the large number of people internally displaced by border conflicts.

In addition to the problem of refugees, modernising agriculture is a priority in Georgia.

"The Government should invest more in the countryside and reduce our dependence on Russian energy sources," says Giorgi Tsagareishvili.

"We plan to draw up a strategy that will enable rural areas to develop out of poverty," Ketty Makharashvili replies.

RESPECT. Ketty Makharashvili and Giorgi Tsagareishvili are political opponents in the new Georgian Parliament – but have the same basic democratic outlook. Together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Sida is providing funding for gender equality efforts in the Parliament and for the Tbilisi School of Political Studies.

Photo: Mikael Röhr

COORDINATED SAFETY NET. In Pinsk and other cities in Belarus, public agencies and NGOs are working together on a programme to combat drug misuse.

From the exhibition "Drugs kill". Photo: Maria Söderberg

Pinsk stops drugs in time

A teenage boy wanders round a park in central Pinsk in Belarus. He stinks of glue, and his eyes stare emptily into the distance. A couple of militiamen approach, and quickly he shoves his plastic bag into his pocket. But too late – he has already been discovered.

Via a drugs clinic and a youth welfare committee, the boy and his parents are signed up for a five-week anti-drugs programme.

"The alternative is to pay a fine, and no one wants to do that," says Nadya Avsievich. She is chair of Kalegium, a Pinsk-based NGO that is cooperating with the Swedish National Association for a Drug-free Society

"First they get to meet us, and we talk about why this boy has started sniffing glue and get him to take part in a role play called 'Do drugs solve the problem?"

The next meeting, at the youth welfare inspectorate, concerns the link between drugs and crime. At the culture and sports agency Rovesnik, a social educator shows films about drug abuse.

THE FOURTH SESSION, hosted by the NGO Mothers Against Drugs, gives the boy a chance to meet a former drug addict. And the fifth one sees him back at Rovesnik.

During the Soviet era, there was a social safety net for children and young people, and misuse of drugs was rare. Schools and youth palaces organised a range of activities, and youngsters could join the Pioneers.

Today, most activities outside school cost money. Parents work more, and young people are left to fend for themselves.

"The Pinsk model offers a new safety net, in which local and national authorities are also cooperating," Avsievich explains. "Previously, they were at a loss what to do about the problem, and had no coherent strategy."

Keeping TB in check in Kaliningrad

"Just look at that starry sky!"

Zoya Yefimenko, a clinical pathologist at Kaliningrad's TB clinic, is talking about the mycobacteria glittering under her new microscope. Each "star" can cause tuberculosis – the widely feared lung disease that is once again on the increase south-east of the Baltic. Now in a more dangerous, resistant form.

The clinic's laboratory has been provided with modern equipment and training, thanks to a Sida/WHO project to strengthen tuberculosis control in the Russian oblast of Kaliningrad and prevent an epidemic of the disease in the Baltic Sea region. As a result, the laboratory is now quality assured. In a cabinet, getting on for 15,000 samples are awaiting examination.

CONTROL LABORATORY. At the TB clinic in Kaliningrad, the laboratory is right next door to patient wards. Tuberculosis is an indicator of poor living standards. Someone with a healthy immune system runs a smaller risk of infection.

Photo: Stanislav Pokrovsky

"The crucial thing is to detect the tubercle bacillus early on, when patients are at their most infectious," says Yevgeny Turkin, the centre's clinical director.

Kaliningrad Oblast has around a million inhabitants. In 2000, 940 of them developed TB; in 2005, the number was 1,185.

"Many of them are HIV-infected drug users or have serious alcohol problems," Turkin points out. "The rest are people who are out of work, with a poor diet and poor housing."

A male nurse comes in to borrow the clinic's petrol card.

"He's going into the city centre to distribute tablets to the homeless, to disabled people and to drug addicts. To guard against infection himself, he has to make sure he gets plenty of vitamins and proteins," Turkin explains.

The WHO has some twenty reference laboratories for drug-resistant tuberculosis around the world. Sven Hoffner, associate professor at the Swedish Institute for Infectious Disease Control, heads the one in Stockholm. He notes that earlier tests in Kaliningrad indicated an extremely high proportion of resistant bacteria:

"But at that time the laboratories had no control and quality assurance systems. Now we're waiting for the improved laboratory in Kaliningrad to send bacterial strains to us, so we can arrive at a more precise figure."

HIV information in new packaging

In Ukraine, the Gay Alliance goes out into parks in the evenings to hand out information and packs of condoms to men who have sex with men.

In Moldova the East–West Aids Foundation is challenging fashion-conscious young people to dress up for the evening – with matching condom packs as accessories. The girls can choose pink ones to go with their handbags, while the boys can opt for striped alternatives to match their freshly ironed shirts.

To begin with, Orthodox priests were up in arms against the campaign, but more recently they have come to realise its importance.

FOR HEALTH AND SELF-ESTEEM. Match your condom pack to your party gear, is the message of a campaign in Moldova.

Photo: Andrei Mardari

See the child first – not the disability

In the Russian language, there is still a lot of prejudice about children with disabilities. "Defectology" is the study of defects, and the job of a "defectologist" is to correct defects and deficiencies in a child.

The Early Intervention Institute in St Petersburg is trying to change attitudes and to consign the term "invalid" to the scrap heap. Its staff are more concerned to look at what a child can do, than what he or she can't do. And a team of psychologists, educationalists and speech therapists is helping families to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream day nurseries and school classes.

Take Viktoria, for instance, who was born with the chromosome disorder Down's syndrome. Her parents wanted her to go to an ordinary day nursery. Viktoria now attends Kindergarten No. 15 in St Petersburg, where she talks, draws and plays with the other children. If it had not worked out, other options would have had to be explored.

Yura is another example of how attitudes are gradually changing. When he was born with cerebral palsy, the authorities advised his parents to put him in a children's home. But they refused, because they knew he would get very little stimulus there and would perhaps even end up bedridden. Now, Yura attends a mainstream school. He is slower-moving than his classmates, but understands just as much.

Sida has long been a major source of support for the Early Intervention Institute, whose approach is now beginning to be emulated by similar establishments in other parts of Russia. In a current project with Sida funding, the St Petersburg institute is working in partnership with the Swedish Handicap Institute. One important aim is to increase access to assistive technology and habilitation. The institute's own premises are to be made more accessible and to serve as a model for other public buildings. In addition, databases on disabilities and assistive technology are to be developed, to provide better information for children, parents, politicians, the general public, relevant professions, and companies that can manufacture equipment for the disabled.

A CHANCE TO DEVELOP. Viktoria attends Kindergarten No. 15 in St Petersburg.The picture is from Save the Children Sweden's film "Just like other children".

Photo: Niklas Berglund

Preparing for paternity

Vinnytsya's "School for Dads" is popular among the young men of the city.

"It's great – so many want to attend that we can't accommodate them all," says Volodymyr Martseniuk.

Martseniuk is an engineer and an educationist, a father himself, and the prime mover behind the School for Dads, which is held in a maternity hospital in Vinnytsya in Ukraine. Here, fathers-to-be come for advice on health and other aspects of parenthood. Over six sessions, they are given information on how to register their child, what benefits are available, and how parental leave works. Gender roles in the family are another major talking point. But most important of all probably is the opportunity to meet other men in the same situation and just talk about the big day that lies ahead.

"Sessions last two hours, but participants often stay on afterwards," Volodymyr Martseniuk points out.

Other experienced tutors at the "school" demonstrate the use of soft mats and exercise balls to promote relaxation and concentration, based on a model borrowed from Sweden.

"Just think, if we'd had something like this when we were about to become fathers," exclaims a man who is a retired colonel, a lawyer and a father of three. "I was afraid even to hold our first baby!"

FATHERS ON THE BALL. Tutors at the School for Dads in Vinnytsya in Ukraine talk with prospective fathers about medicine, law and money matters – and teach them to relax. Similar Sida-financed classes are being held in Kirovohrad, Ternopil, Poltava and Lviv. Photo: David Dahmén

From nightmare to hope

FRESH START. Oleg Litvak has been given a helping hand to set up his own photocopying kiosk in his native Ukraine. In Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, more than 20 per cent of trafficking victims are men. Photo: David Dahmén

In the Ukrainian city of Vinnytsya, courses on running a small business are being organised for victims of human trafficking.

Oleg Litvak is one of the people who have taken the course and been provided with a small start-up capital. Now he has set up a photocopying kiosk.

"I was lured into working for a construction company in Russia," he recalls. "But when we got there they took our passports and refused to pay us for several months. They locked us up and beat us, and when they finally let us go we were kicked out of the country."

Traffickers establish contact with potential victims in the bars, discos and markets of small towns. Many of the people who rise to the bait are well educated and already have a job, but still want to try a different life with better pay. The men usually end up doing heavy manual labour on farms and building sites. Women are often given work in restaurants – although many are also exploited as sex slaves.

"In Ukraine the oldest victim of trafficking in human beings is 63, the youngest just three. The children are put out to beg," says Fredric Larsson, counter-trafficking coordinator for the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).In Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine alone, the IOM, with funding from Sida, has helped more than 5,500 victims of trafficking.

Turkey, Russia and Poland top the list of 47 transit and destination countries. But states such as Japan, Libya, Nigeria and Sweden also appear on the list.

A small but growing number of victims are now daring to testify in court against their exploiters, with support from the IOM, and more and more traffickers are being convicted of their crimes. Fredric Larsson is also very pleased that Gomel University in Belarus is admitting 15 students every year to train as prosecutors and lawyers specialising in the field of human trafficking.

GRASS-ROOTS HEALTH. In Jumgal in southern Kyrgyzstan, villagers are defining their own health priorities and schoolchildren are helping to teach hygiene to younger pupils. The approach used here is now spreading across the country, and has recently been adopted as a national model. Photo: Christopher Herwig

Kyrgyz people define their own priorities for health

In a health project in Kyrgyzstan, local people are being invited to say what they see as the main priorities.
"I was a bit concerned about how it would turn out. But in fact it's working far better than expected," says project manager Tobias Schüth.

Now the inhabitants of Jumgal in southern Kyrgyzstan are beginning to get used to an approach that is a complete reversal of the authoritarian ways of the Soviet era. The health project in which they are involved is being run by the Red Cross with funding from Sida, and has a broader aim than simply improving health:

"We want to activate people, to get them to assume responsibility for their own lives and create a more democratic society," Schüth explains.

Shaken Yanikeeva is a doctor and has a training role within the project. She arranges meetings in the different villages, at which some ten families per village get together to rank their health problems and discuss what can be done.

"One illness that is often mentioned is brucellosis, a fever disease transmitted from cattle to humans. Goitre caused by a lack of iodine, iron deficiency, and kidney and lung problems are also common, as are high blood pressure and alcohol abuse."

PREVENTION AND CURE of sexually transmitted diseases is another concern.

"The climate in the high mountains is cold and damp, and the air is bad, as people burn coal. The villagers want help in the shape of improved diets, better health care and clean water," says Yanikeeva.

After the meetings, village health committees are set up, which join together to form health councils. These councils are registered as NGOs, and liaise with a wide variety of individuals and groups working in partnership with the local administration.

Children from the village schools are doing valuable work as health volunteers. The oldest pupils teach the younger ones about hygiene and how to grow healthy vegetables.

Learning by play for a sustainable future

Cod is important in the food chains of the Baltic. And the people living on the shores of that sea are important in ensuring the species' survival. Schoolchildren in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad are learning that everything is interconnected.

Inscribed in large letters on the blackboard in class 6A of School No. 31 is the word "LABARDAN". It is the Old Russian for "cod".

"How many words can you make from 'Labardan'?" asks Vera Abashkina, a biology teacher who runs the school's ecology programme.

The boy who wins finds eight. In the next game, the children form a net that allows small fish to pass through and only traps large ones old enough to have reproduced. Then there is a quiz. The kids know everything about the cod – what it looks like, that it contains fat-soluble vitamins A, D and E, that it needs salt water and oxygen, and that it is threatened by eutrophication and overfishing.

Next on the programme is charades, in which the youngsters act out the parts of fish, worms, fishing rods and nets. Finally, they perform a play. It is a fairytale about a fish that promises to grant you your wishes – though not just any wish – if you let it go.

THIS PARTICULAR LESSON the pupils are doing biology. But they have also talked about cod in other lessons, in English and Russian for instance. Back home, their parents were very surprised to hear what they were studying.

"We teachers didn't realise either that the cod was under threat, until we started a study group on education in sustainable development," says Vera Abashkina.

The group, which met over a period of a few months, was aimed at teachers in different subjects, librarians, and representatives of the parents' association. Participants planned and tried out a variety of teaching methods.

Sustainable development is not just about the environment, it also has economic and social dimensions. The pupils understand now that a polluted, fished-out sea will also put commercial fishermen and others in the fishing industry out of work.

"What you get is a dialogue that creates a link between the environment, →

RIPPLES ON THE WATER. Pupils at School No. 31 in Kaliningrad have quizzes on the cod, a symbol of the Baltic Sea ecosystem. Providing a base for the project is Naturewatch Baltic, a network supported by Sida.

Photo: Stanislav Pokrovsky

our stomachs, and society," explains Ludmila Glushkova, an associate professor in education and psychology who led the study group.

THE METHODS ARE UNCONVENTIONAL for a Russian school, but the head teacher has backed the group all the way. They are preparing School No. 31 to take part in Education for Change, a project involving a wide range of partners – including the EU, the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Swedish Institute, the Immanuel Kant State University of Russia and the local environmental NGO Ekozashita ("Ecodefence").

Members of the group are keen to share their experience and the methods they have learnt with other schools.

"Each of us is prepared to go out and present the project to others," says Ludmila Glushkova.

LONG-AWAITED TREATMENT. Autumn 2005 saw the opening of the St Petersburg South-West Wastewater Treatment Plant, built with support from Sida. Sewage from a population of 700,000 is now treated at the new facility – an important contribution to tackling eutrophication. Since the 1990s Sida has also funded a number of water and sewage projects in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine. Photo: Mats Widén

Concerted support for a strong civil society

Forum Syd acts as a coordinating body for Swedish non-governmental organisations involved in development cooperation. Sida provides financial support through its Department for Cooperation with NGOs, Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict Management. To qualify for funding, organisations must as a rule meet at least ten per cent of total project costs themselves.

The support which Sida provides is intended to promote the development of a vigorous civil society which empowers poor people to improve their living conditions.

According to Sida's policy, civil society is "an arena, separate from the state, the market and the individual household, in which people organise themselves and act together to promote their common interests".

The Naturewatch Baltic network has been operated since 1992 by WWF Sweden, with support from Sida and Forum Syd. It brings together teachers, schoolchildren and environmental NGOs in the countries around the Baltic. Every year, some 20,000 pupils take part in its activities.

Less energy out the window

In Soviet times, natural resources were seen as unlimited and virtually free to the citizen. The bill came later, and it will be a long time before it is paid.

Sida has been helping to reform the energy sector in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, district heating systems have been upgraded and energy-saving measures introduced in many public buildings across eastern Europe. Such projects can take from three to six years to complete.

DISTRICT HEATING UPGRADE. In Moldova, district heating plants now usually burn natural gas from Russia. Heavy fuel oil is available as a reserve. Photo: Andrei Madari

In Moldova, as in the other former Soviet states, however, there are still many buildings where energy is going to waste, with heat escaping through large, draughty windows. To make matters worse, between October and April some homes are far too warm: radiators are often connected throughout a building and cannot be individually adjusted.

"For as little as $360 a building, heat losses could be dramatically reduced, but even that hasn't been done. More efficient production plants and pipes are also needed," says Sida's energy expert Kjell Larsson.

He is visiting Moldova to inspect a district heating plant in the capital Chisinau.

"District heating is important in a large city with a high density of homes, especially when power and heat production are combined."

Chisinau's existing district heating plant is run down, though, and its control room outdated. Huge investments need to be made – an estimated $250 million over ten years, Larsson explains.

"Sida is currently helping Moldova to provide better heating for hospitals and schools in a number of towns," he continues.

"We're running pilot studies and demonstration projects, and establishing contacts with sources of finance. To go on from there, though, there'll have to be major commitments of funds from the World Bank or the European Investment Bank."

Energy is a crucial issue for eastern Europe. The former Soviet states which have insufficient energy resources of their own are still heavily reliant on Russia. This was made very clear around new year 2006, when the Russian gas supplier Gazprom increased its prices to countries such as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine by several hundred per cent. When Ukraine refused to pay, Gazprom turned off the gas, with the result that several countries in western Europe were also left without supplies.

Antiquated agriculture gradually changing

The stench of ammonia is almost unbearable in the warm, humid cattle shed. Squeezed into the building on the Trudivnik collective farm are 280 dairy cows, and the farm workers have to zigzag their way between livestock, straw and manure.

"This place needs a complete overhaul, for the sake of both the livestock and the people working here," says Andrey Tsybulko, a lawyer who is acting as an adviser to the Vinnytsya Dairy Supply Chain Development Project.

The project, run by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), is aimed at dairy farmers in six villages in the Vinnytsya region of western Ukraine. Both collective farms with hundreds of cows and smallholdings with just a few are involved.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, roughly half the cooperative farms in Ukraine have gone bankrupt, and many dairy cows have had to be slaughtered.

CHANGING THE FACE of east European agriculture will take time, and will require both money and patience. The IFC project, supported by Sida, is promoting a completely new, market-oriented way of thinking. It covers the whole of the agricultural supply chain – from ministers to farmers, and from lenders to dairies and customers.

On average, a cow on a collective farm produces 2,300 litres a year, while those on smaller holdings manage around 4,000 litres.

"We're trying to achieve an annual yield of 5,000–6,000 litres for collective farm cows. That's still well below the figure for a Swedish cow, which is →

TOO LITTLE PROTEIN. Cows need balanced feed if they are to produce more milk.

Photo: David Dahmén

around 9,000 litres," says Tsybulko.

Trudivnik still operates as a typical kolkhoz in a fairly typical village – Yarmolintsy. The cooperative has some 170 members who, besides the dairy cows, own another 400 or so other cattle and around a hundred pigs. They grow wheat, sugar beet and maize, which provide wages in kind for the farm workers.

Managing the dairy project for the IFC is the Swede Morgan Tinnberg. Alongside Andrey Tsybulko, who has analysed all the legal implications for the farms involved, the project team includes an information officer and specialists on cattle, modern technology, agricultural economics etc.

A key partner in the project is the Ukrainian dairy Loostdorf, which is supplied with an average of 150 tonnes of milk a day, but which has the capacity to process another 200 tonnes.

"THE FIRST PRIORITY," says Tsybulko, "is to balance the cows' feed, to give them more protein. At the moment, they're getting too much carbohydrate in their diet. With more soya meal, sunflower meal and clover they'll be able to produce more than twice as much. The money for the milk can be used for new investments."

The Farmers' House in Aspindza in Georgia is another example of agricultural development.

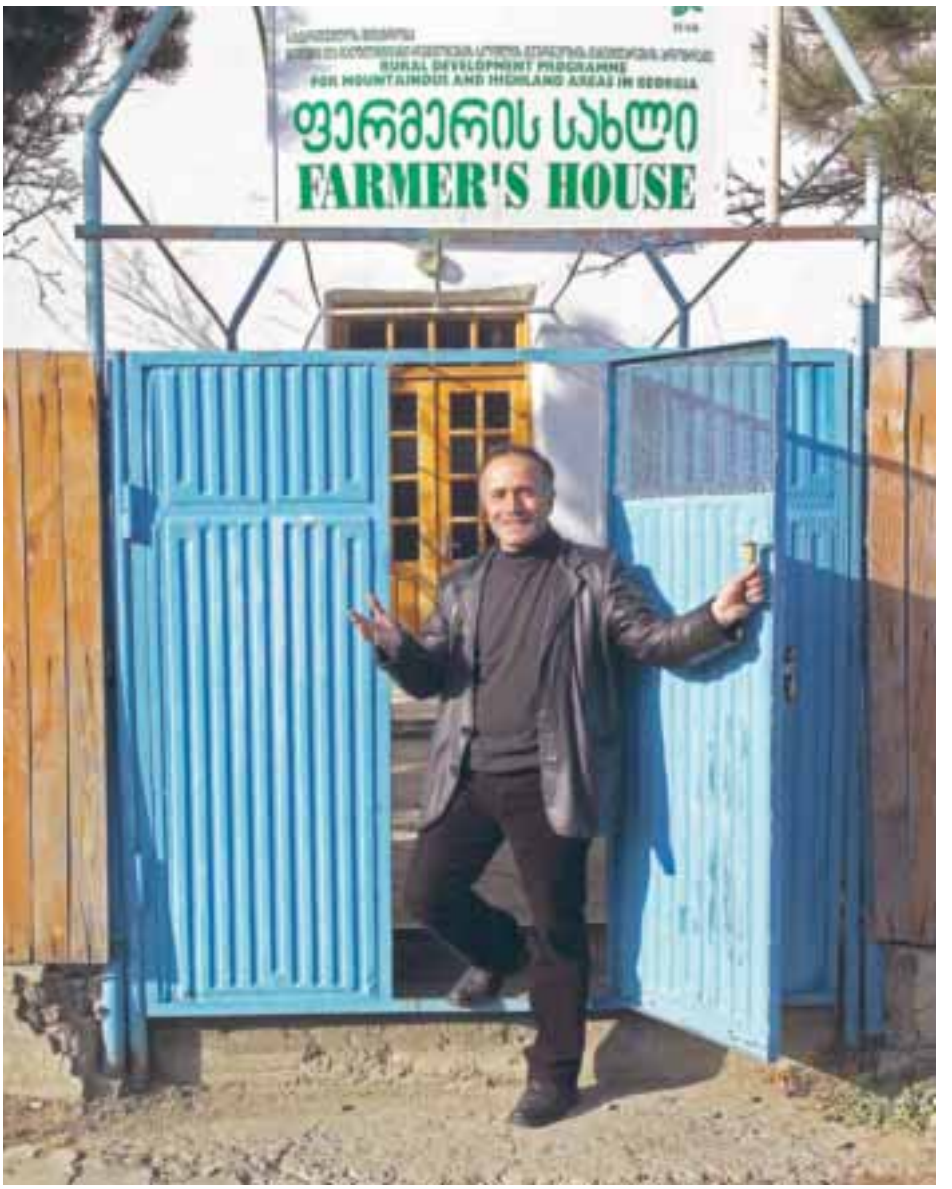
Farmers from the region come here to learn how to produce honey, or how to improve barley harvests using good-quality seed.

"Or else they just come to let the vet have a look at their new calf," says Nugzari Londaridze, the centre's chairman.

He himself is now getting good crops of barley, which are turned into beer. Oilseed rape, wheat, good potatoes and onions are also grown in the area. Apples and pears too, but not so many grapes – they are commoner in the west of the country.

The Farmers' House is backed by an organisation with some 200 members, roughly 70 of them women.

"One of our aims is to get even more women involved in agriculture," says Londaridze.



RESOURCE FOR FARMERS. The Farmers' House in Aspindza, Georgia, offers free advice to men and women working in agriculture in the area. Sheep production is high on their list of priorities. Photo: Mikael Röhr

Belarusian small businesses learn from each other

"An entrepreneur has to be able to cope in any environment," says Stanislav Tamazovich, a small businessman in Vitebsk in Belarus.

He left a well-paid job with a development fund to become his own boss. Since 1997 he has been supplying computer software to companies large and small. He is also managing director of the Association of Employers and Entrepreneurs in Vitebsk.

That organisation is one of six involved in the "Support to the SME Sector" programme, which is being run in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Southern Sweden and the Swedish Federation of Private Enterprises, with funding from Sida. The aim is to develop the organisations' capacity in management, member services, public relations and advocacy. Their members are learning to deal with legislation and taxes, inspections, licensing and registration. New opportunities are being created to develop business ideas and reach wider markets. The Vitebsk Association brings together 84 small and medium-sized private firms, working in sectors such as plastic products, electronics, furniture and legal advice.

Members meet to discuss import and export issues and IT, for example. At one gathering, new draft legislation to fight corruption was presented.

Vitebsk, Belarus. Photo: Jens Olof Lasthein

Keeping tabs on Tajik land

Around 75 per cent of Sweden's development assistance to central Asia goes to Tajikistan. Agriculture is one important sector in need of reform. The first step in securing its development is to establish who owns what land and how it is allowed to be used.

Åke Olson, an expert from the Swedish National Land Survey's international arm Swedesurvey, is based in Dushanbe. There, he and other Swedish experts are helping the Tajik authorities to build from scratch a system for the registration and taxation of real estate and to ensure proper safeguards for rights to land and buildings.

Tajikistan is the poorest of the former Soviet republics. Between 1993 and 1997, civil war drove the economy even further into the ground.

For a long time, IT skills were practically non-existent, and only one member of the country's State Land Committee spoke passable English. Now, says Åke Olson, things are improving:

"Tajikistan has made some progress in terms of developing the necessary systems, but it will probably take some time to put in place a land survey organisation that can be described as modern."

LAND RIGHTS. Cotton is the main crop in Tajikistan. State-owned land is made available under various forms of tenure. Photo: Åke Olson

Inspired young minds

The Kyiv Economics Institute has moved into its new premises. Here, a group of young Ukrainian researchers in economics will be providing guidance and advice to their country's decision makers. All of them have returned to Ukraine after taking PhDs abroad. Research interests represented at the Institute include growth and productivity, economic demography and labour economics.

"When I was living in the United States I really missed Kyiv," says Olena Nizalova. "But now I'm back home I long for the productive research climate that you get at an American university. One of our main aims is to develop a local research resource and create an attractive environment for researchers from all over the world."

READY TO FLY. Through the basic and applied research it undertakes, the Kyiv Economics Institute hopes to help Ukraine to take off. Soon its researchers will be able to offer advice to the President, Parliament and the public at large.

Photo: David Dahmén

SWINGING MOSCOW. The Russian capital is a melting pot of nationalities from the Soviet Union. Photo: Gueorgui Pinkhassov/Magnum

Presence, jazz and budget reform

Rolf Eidem, a Swedish economist, sees himself as an "intrapreneur". As head of the Swedish–Russian Cooperation Programme, based at the Ministry of Finance, he is helping to change Russia's system of public administration from the inside, inch by inch.

"I believe in gradual land rise. You have to compare Russia with Russia, and not with the West," he says.

The budget process is at the core of the Sida-funded cooperation that has been under way since 1992 between the Swedish and Russian finance ministries. Results-based management, tax legislation and tax collection, and auditing of public services are among the areas covered. Some 300 different projects have been undertaken.

"A key achievement has been helping to reform the way public authorities are managed," Eidem points out.

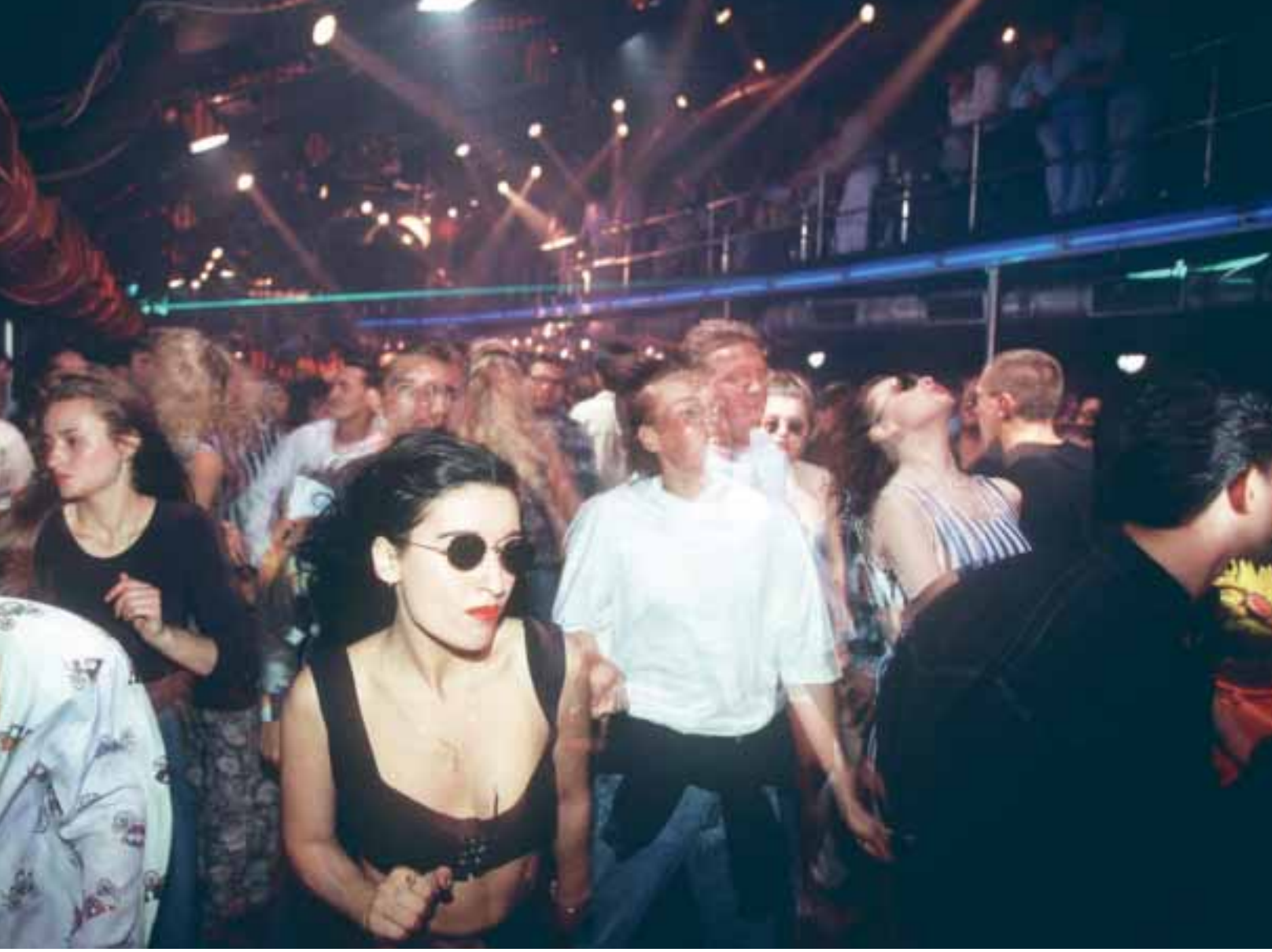
In the past, what a government agency was supposed to do was determined by its allocation of funding. Now, every agency has to define its own, tangible objectives, a principle which also makes the jobs of the officials working there more independent and interesting. A move in the same direction is the programme's initiative to produce an accessible version of the budget, which can now be found on the Russian Ministry of Finance's website.

RUSSIA EXPERT. When in Moscow, Rolf Eidem battles with budgets by day and sings jazz by night.

"Sweden's support has also made a difference in the area of taxation," Eidem continues.

RUSSIA IS MOVING TOWARDS a policy of levying "the right tax in the right way" – how much is raised is determined by the state of the economy. This shift is also an important factor in the country's new system for the management of government agencies, which has been inspired in particular by the approach used in Sweden.

Rolf Eidem's years in Russia have given him an in-depth understanding of



the country's language and culture.

"My work here has put government administration in Sweden in perspective. For my own part, what I appreciate most about the Russians is that they have such a heck of a presence!"

"IN THE YEARS TO COME, foreign investment will be a key factor. If it grows, regular jobs will be created, employees will start to make demands, business associations will be set up, employment law will develop – and with it democracy."

Eidem sees the 2005 strike at the Ford plant in St Petersburg, for example, as a good sign:

"People sense that there is money in Russia, and they're no longer prepared to be exploited."

Sweden and Estonia supporting rescue services in Armenia

Since gaining its independence in 1991, Estonia has worked very closely with the Swedish Rescue Services Agency to develop its capacity to respond to major accidents. Now Estonia is a member of the EU and is in turn assisting other countries.

Following the earthquake in Armenia in 1988, the Swedish agency has been cooperating with that country as well. That was its first major international operation.

Since the summer of 2005 the rescue services authorities of Sweden and Estonia have been working together in Armenia. The aims of this three-way partnership are to establish and develop rescue services, prevent accidents and disasters, and limit the consequences of any that do occur.

"Despite limited resources, our Armenian colleagues are now developing a capacity to protect their population," says Thord Tärnbrant, who heads the project at the Swedish Rescue Services Agency.

UNIQUE NATURE. The Baltic Spit stretches from Poland to the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad Oblast. Photo: Stanislav Pokrovsky

New driving forces for clean water

Over in St Petersburg a large wastewater treatment plant was opened in 2005, but Kaliningrad is still waiting for its slice of the action – despite the fact that it is some time since Sida and several other organisations set aside funding to improve drinking water supplies and sewage treatment in the city.

Now, though, simpler procedures and a manager with the necessary drive could produce results.

"To begin with, the project didn't fit in with Russian procedures and standards," explains Vera Åhsberg, project manager with the water and wastewater consultants Sweco Viak AB. She was born in Leningrad, lives in Sweden, and has both a Russian and a Swedish engineering degree.

IN RUSSIA, the first step in an undertaking of this kind is to prepare detailed drawings, based on strict building standards. After that, contractors are invited to submit tenders. In Sweden, it works the other way round: first a rough outline is produced, and then the contractors suggest detailed solutions in their bids.

The municipal water company Vodokanal in St Petersburg had the same problems, and in that city, too, it took a long time to get the treatment plant built.

"But there they have a managing director with a lot of drive, who sees the overall picture and thinks in global terms," Åhsberg points out.

Kaliningrad previously lacked someone with those qualities, but now hopes are pinned on the new head of water and sewage services. His first challenge is to treble the supply of drinking water. But there is still the problem of old, leaking mains, which entail a risk of contamination.

A new wastewater plant is eagerly awaited. The old one is inefficient, and in practice most of Kaliningrad's

RUSSIAN EXAMPLE. When St Petersburg opened its large sewage treatment plant, the managing director was presented with the Swedish Baltic Sea Award. Will Kaliningrad be the next winner? Photo: Mats Widén

sewage is pumped into the Baltic untreated. The Russians are now tackling the problem with Swedish help, but the Swedes have waited far too long, according to Vera Åhsberg, a seasoned consultant who is used to negotiating with water companies and authorities in eastern Europe. At the negotiating table, she says, there are big differences between Swedes and Russians:

"WE RUSSIANS may be very good engineers, but we rarely see the wider picture. Swedes are more positive and look ahead. But their concern to solve problems means they're too accommodating and patient."

Familiar as she is with both the Swedish and the Russian business culture, Åhsberg can sometimes "interpret" between the two. But when it comes to humour, she feels more relaxed among her fellow Russians.

"I told a water company boss who was suspicious of foreigners that he shouldn't see spies behind every bush, and we had a good laugh about it."

SCARCE COMMODITY. Vera Åhsberg is project manager with the Swedish water and sewage firm Sweco Viak AB. In Kaliningrad, she sticks to bottled drinking water – the variety you get from the tap is not to be recommended. Photo: Stanislav Pokrovsky

RUSSIA

CAPITAL: Moscow

POPULATION: 143 million

LANGUAGES: Russian is the official language

ETHNIC GROUPS: Russians 80%. There are around a hundred other nationalities, including Jews, Tatars, Ukrainians, Chuvash, Bashkirs and Belarusians

RELIGIONS: Russian Orthodox Christian 80%, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish and others

UKRAINE

CAPITAL: Kyiv (Kiev)

POPULATION: 47 million

LANGUAGES: Ukrainian, Russian

ETHNIC GROUPS: Ukrainians 73%, Russians 22%; Jews, Belarusians, Romanians, Moldovans, Bulgarians, Poles and others

RELIGIONS: The majority are Orthodox Christian; there are also Catholics, Jews and Muslims

BELARUS

CAPITAL: Minsk

POPULATION: 10 million

LANGUAGES: Belarusian, Russian

ETHNIC GROUPS: Belarusians 81%, Russians 11%, Poles, Ukrainians and others

RELIGIONS: Russian Orthodox Christian 70%, Roman Catholic Christian 20%, Muslim, Jewish

MOLDOVA

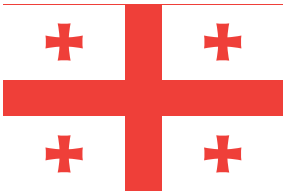
CAPITAL: Chisinau

POPULATION: 4.2 million

LANGUAGES: Moldovan and Russian

ETHNIC GROUPS: Moldovans 45%, Ukrainians 14%, Russians 13%, Gagauz 3.5%, Bulgarians, Jews and others

RELIGIONS: The majority are Orthodox Christian; also Greek-Catholic Christians, Protestants and Jews



GEORGIA

CAPITAL: Tbilisi

POPULATION: 5 million

LANGUAGES: Georgian, Russian, Armenian, Azeri, Abkhaz and Ossetic

ETHNIC GROUPS: Georgians 70%, Armenians 8%, Russians 6%, Azerbaijani 6%, Ossetes 3%, Abkhaz 2%, others 5%

RELIGIONS: Georgian Orthodox Christian 65%, Muslim 11%, Russian Orthodox Christian 10%; Armenian Orthodox Christian, Catholic, Jewish

ARMENIA

CAPITAL: Yerevan

POPULATION: 3 million

LANGUAGES: Armenian, Russian, Kurdish

ETHNIC GROUPS: Armenians 95%, Kurds, Russians, Azeri

RELIGIONS: The majority belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church

AZERBAIJAN

CAPITAL: Baku

POPULATION: 8.4 million

LANGUAGES: Azeri, Russian

ETHNIC GROUPS: Azeri 91%, Russians and Armenians 3% (almost all Armenians are in Nagorno-Karabakh), Lezgin 2%; others 4%

RELIGIONS: Muslim 93% (of whom around 70% are Shi'ite and 30% Sunni); others are predominantly Russian or Armenian Orthodox Christian

KYRGYZSTAN

CAPITAL: Bishkek

POPULATION: 5 million

LANGUAGES: Kyrgyz, Russian

ETHNIC GROUPS: Kyrgyz 66%, Russians 12%, Uzbeks 14%

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim and Russian Orthodox Christian

TAJIKISTAN

CAPITAL: Dushanbe

POPULATION: 6.2 million

LANGUAGES: Tajik, Russian

ETHNIC GROUPS: Tajiks 65%, Uzbeks 25%, Russians 4%; Tatars, Kyrgyz, Ukrainians and others

RELIGIONS: Sunni Muslim and Ismaili Shi'ite, Russian Orthodox Christian


NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
ARCTIC
UK
NORWAY
SWEDEN
Barents Sea
NETH.
DENMARK
GERMANY
FINLAND
Murmansk
Baltic Sea
POLAND
CZ. REP.
SLOV.
HUNG.
EST.
LAT.
LITH.
Kaliningrad
Petrozavodsk
St Petersburg
Pskov
Novgorod
Arkhangelsk
Vologda
Minsk
BELARUS
UKRAINE
Moscow
Kyiv
ROMANIA
MOLDOVA
Chisinau
Dnieper
Ob
Don
Volga
Volgograd
Black Sea
Omsk
Tomsk
Novosibirsk
TURKEY
GEORGIA
Tbilisi
Yerevan
ARMENIA
SYRIA
AZERBAIJAN
KAZAKHSTAN
Baku
Caspian Sea
Aral Sea
UZBEKISTAN
TURKMENISTAN
Ashgabat
Tashkent
Almaty
Bishkek
KYRGYZSTAN
Amu Darya
Dushanbe
IRAN
TAJIKISTAN
CHINA
AFGHANISTAN


C OCEAN
NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN
Kolyma
Lena
Lena
Sea of Okhotsk
RUSSIA
Amur
Yenisey
Amur
Lake Baikal
Irkutsk
Yenisey
Sea of Japan
Vladivostok
JAPAN
MONGOLIA
CHINA
N. KOREA
Eastern Europe and Central Asia
International borders
Rivers
Capitals
Major cities
0 250 500 750 Kilometer
0 250 500 750 Miles

HOME AGAIN. In Ukraine, Crimean Tatars are receiving aid from Sweden to build houses.

Photo: Bengt af Geijerstam

Working together for development in the East

Sweden's annual development cooperation budget totals around SEK 20 billion, of which some SEK 700 million goes to the countries of eastern Europe and Central Asia. Russia still accounts for the largest number of projects, but most Sida-funded activities in that country will be concluded by 2010.

Now Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Belarus, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are the main priorities. Sida also gives some support to Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The projects funded are being implemented by Swedish and international organisations, consultants, companies, universities and authorities. Project owners in partner countries include national administrative agencies and companies.

Sida often participates in programmes drawn up by the UN, the EU, the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe), the World Bank and the EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development).

In several of the former Soviet states, Sida is supporting reform processes in areas such as democracy and human rights, sustainable economic growth and management of public finances, gender equality, prison and probation services, health and social security, the environment, education and research, land reform and agricultural development, and conflict prevention.

Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Belarus – all share the same Soviet legacy. But when it comes to how they are managing that legacy, or seeking to cast it off, they differ a great deal. Over the years that have elapsed since the break-up of the Soviet Union, the former constituent republics have become less and less like one another.

The process of change in these countries, from dictatorship to democracy and from a planned to a market economy, is a slow and painful one. The outcome of that process will also have implications for Sweden – its security, its environment and its economy. Through Sida, Sweden is supporting system change, in ways that are geared to the needs of the different countries concerned.

This booklet is about the development cooperation in which Sweden is involved, and the people who are making it happen. They are working for gender equality and human rights, for transparent politics, for stronger social networks around children and young people, for better health, for securer water and energy supplies, for more modern agriculture, for creative research environments, for good working conditions for journalists and small enterprises, and for greater involvement on the part of every member of society.

In short, for sustainable development.

Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development.
Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.

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