

Sweden's Open Government Partnership Action Plan 2023–2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. Background and summary3
- 2. Sweden and the OGP3
- 3. Open data4
- 4. Corruption5
- 5. The process for developing the Action Plan5
 - 5.1 Consultation6
 - 5.2 Conclusions and implementation.....6
- 6. Sweden’s commitments in the OGP Action Plan 2023–20257
 - 6.1 Commitment 1: Adoption of the principles of the Open Data Charter7
 - 6.2 Commitment 2: Dedicated point of contact for and implementation of the ODC principles8
 - 6.3 Commitment 3: Purchasing data8
 - 6.4 Commitment 4: Develop anti-corruption work.....8
- 7. Documents and reporting9

1. Background and summary

The speed at which society is changing and the intensity of that change – economically, technologically, socially, politically and in terms of security – is creating an ever-more complex environment. Countries are tackling these challenges by designing and implementing reforms that support sustainability, inclusion and growth but also through improving access to and the quality of the services provided by the public sector. This is fundamental to building the trust that is needed to ensure that citizens have faith in public administration and the government as a whole.

Openness and transparency are fundamental principles in Swedish public administration. The principle of public access to official documents, which is expressed in one of Sweden's fundamental laws that make up its Constitution, means that government agency documents must be accessible to the public. There is a tradition of openness and transparency that Sweden can be proud of.

Based on the twin aims of working to increase access to open data and utilising the opportunities presented by digitalisation for greater transparency and openness in public administration, a consultation with civil society was carried out on 19 October 2022 to seek proposals for commitments in Sweden's new Open Government Partnership (OGP) Action Plan. OGP is an international organisation for national actors that are working for greater transparency and more citizen-centred development in their public administrations to share knowledge and experience.

The results of this consultation show that there are a number of issues in this area that Sweden can continue to work with. In the Action Plan, Sweden has chosen to prioritise issues related to the adoption of the principles of the Open Data Charter, promotion efforts with activities targeted to encourage learning about and the dissemination of the Open Data Charter's principles concerning data sharing, as well as follow-up of the principles and a particular focus on public purchasing data.

The consultation also highlighted broader issues related to anti-corruption work. In its Action Plan, Sweden has therefore chosen to give priority to developing its anti-corruption work.

2. Sweden and the OGP

As part of Sweden's work in general to maintain its citizens' trust in Swedish public administration, Sweden wishes to continue to develop its participation in the OGP.

Sweden's participation in the OGP includes a requirement to draw up a national action plan. Each action plan covers a three-year period and is to show the initiatives that a member country is taking to contribute towards achieving the aims of the Open Government Declaration. With this Action Plan, Sweden is renewing its commitment as a member of the OGP.

In its previous action plan, Sweden made the following commitments:

- A national action plan for open data
- Make open data that can best benefit society accessible
- Promote Sweden's capacity for open and data-driven innovation in collaborations between research, business and civil society.
- Dialogue with civil society on the opportunities presented by digitalisation, open data and collaboration.

With its Action Plan for 2023–2025, within the framework of the OGP and in collaboration with civil society, Sweden now wishes to develop its work with open data and anti-corruption further, thereby exploiting new possibilities for a more open and collaborative central government administration.

3. Open data

In the mid-2000s, definitions of open data and open administration began to take shape. According to the European Data Portal, the term open (government) data is defined as “the information collected, produced or paid for by the public bodies (also referred to as Public Sector Information) and made freely available for re-use for any purpose”.

Open data plays a key role in contributing to open and collaborative administration. The benefits of open data vary and include matters of greater efficiencies in public administration, economic growth in the private sector, and more comprehensive social security. Making public administration data accessible as open data thus requires changes at both the technological and policy levels.

The OGP has pointed out that public actors produce large quantities of valuable data in their activities and that when such data is shared with the public as open data, it can be leveraged to benefit society through increased transparency and efficiency, and more innovation. If the data is instead retained within the administration, it becomes more difficult to exploit the development potential of open data.

Sweden has a strong and far-reaching principle of public access to official documents, of which we are proud. However, an important aspect to take into account is that the principle of public access to official documents is fundamentally reactive, i.e. the information must be requested before it is provided. With open data, the goal is instead to be proactive, which means that governments should operate under an ‘open by default’ principle. This means that data that *can* be made available without breaching any legislation or entailing any security risk *should* be made available without a person needing to request it. Central government administration should be more proactive and a trailblazer in making accessible

those components of the data that lead to more co-creation with civil society, business and citizens.

Sweden's work with open data has been continuously developed and the Agency for Digital Government (DIGG) has also been tasked with encouraging open and data-driven innovation, the re-use of open data, and user-driven development of digital information and services within public administration.

4. Corruption

Corruption has negative consequences for individuals, communities and the business sector.

The Open Government Declaration focuses in particular on the following areas: robust anti-corruption measures, ensuring transparency in public procurement, strengthening the principles of the rule of law, making available information about the incomes and assets of senior public servants, protecting whistleblowers, making available information on the effectiveness of preventive measures and measures related to enforcement and oversight, combating bribery and other forms of corruption in both the public and private sectors.

In international comparisons, Sweden is well placed in various rankings of the level of corruption in countries. The organisation Transparency International produces the Corruption Perception Index, which is a composite index that measures perceptions of corruption in the public sector. According to this index, Sweden shared fifth place with Singapore in 2022.

Sweden has been working with the issue of combating various forms of corruption for a long time. The level of ambition for this work was recently raised with the Government's decision to produce a public administration anti-corruption action plan for the period 2021–2023 (Fi2020/04691). The anti-corruption action plan has laid the foundations for a more coherent and structured approach to combating corruption in public administration. The action plan consists in part of promotion measures and in part of an aggregated follow-up of anti-corruption efforts at all levels of public administration.

Sweden has also taken several other initiatives. For example, an inquiry chair has been tasked with determining whether more people should be subject to a regulation concerning post-separation restrictions (a qualifying period or topic restriction) and to suggest how this regulation should be designed (ToR 2022:71).

5. The process for developing the Action Plan

The basis for the Action Plan was prepared using a multi-stakeholder process. This means that participants from civil society have been involved in the preparation of the information that formed the basis for the Action Plan. A draft action plan was then discussed in a follow-up online meeting with representatives of civil society on 22 February 2023.

5.1 Consultation

On 19 October 2022, civil society organisations were invited to a consultation meeting on the theme of ‘Consultation on the potential of digitalisation for a more open and transparent public sector’. An offer to participate was sent on 29 September 2022 via NOD (the national body for dialogue and consultation between the Swedish Government and civil society) to some 40 civil society organisations and an open offer to participate was also published on the NOD website.

Eleven civil society organisations accepted the offer to participate. The consultation was led by officials of the then Ministry of Infrastructure with participation from DIGG, and NOD played a supportive role. The Ministry and DIGG began by presenting the topic to be discussed and the purpose of the consultation, as well as the work that has been done and continues to be done in this area.

The participants were then divided into two groups to discuss a number of questions in greater depth that were sent out to them in connection with their invitation to attend the consultation:

- What can the public sector do to stimulate civil society’s utilisation of and contribution to digitalisation and open data, thereby promoting more transparent central government administration?
- Based on your organisation’s experience/focus/target group – what do you need in order to make open data accessible?
- Do you see a need for long-term dialogue in this area, and if so, what form should it take?

From the discussions, it emerged that there are many interesting points to work on further. A summary is available on NOD’s website (www.nodsverige.se).

The discussion focused on questions such as general digital competence in the community and bridging knowledge gaps as well as funding for knowledge-enhancing initiatives; and cooperation between various actors at different levels in the community to discuss what (cross-sectoral) data is needed to solve concrete social challenges. Questions about greater access to and usability of open data, the need for open access to purchasing data, the need to make civil society visible in the statistics, and questions with a bearing on the fight against corruption were also highlighted.

5.2 Conclusions and implementation

Initially, the proposals that emerged from the consultation were each assigned a priority based on the overall mission and vision of the OGP, and on the purpose of the consultation concerning the opportunities for digitalisation to create a more open and transparent public administration. The potential time and resources that would be needed for the implementation were also taken into account. The Action Plan was subsequently

supplemented with proposals related to the fight against corruption in public administration.

In implementing the Action Plan, the focus should be on a few sub-areas that entail new and expanded opportunities for transparency in public administration, greater access to and usability of open data, and promoting open access to public sector purchasing data. The focus should also be on developing work to combat corruption in public administration.

6. Sweden's commitments in the OGP Action Plan 2023–2025

Many of the commitments presented below are based on the aim to further develop Sweden's work with open data, especially data that can help to foster transparency, and greater co-creation and policy development in partnership with civil society. With a clear focus on working with open data, Sweden is able to uphold several of the OGP's principles, while simultaneously increasing opportunities for collaboration with civil society.

Focusing on open data is motivated by the fact that the information produced by or collected within the public sector is a common asset for central and local government agencies and society as a whole. Sweden has done a lot, but there is still work to be done for open data to reach its potential as a strategic resource in a digitalised Sweden. To encourage work on open data and improve opportunities for co-creation with civil society, Sweden has made a number of specific commitments below as part of its OGP Action Plan.

An important aspect of the OGP's overall mission and vision is the fight against corruption. Sweden has not included its anti-corruption work in previous action plans, but has now chosen to include a commitment to develop this work. Sweden performs well in international comparisons when it comes to corruption, but there is more to do. In order to ensure effective public administration governed by the rule of law moving into the future, and to meet new challenges and threats, the Government intends to develop its anti-corruption work.

6.1 Commitment 1: Adoption of the principles of the Open Data Charter

As part of Sweden's strategic management of data, Sweden should adopt the principles of the Open Data Charter (ODC).

Besides being a strategic development of this issue, the adoption of the ODC principles also increases Sweden's opportunities for international collaboration in this area. The adoption also increases transparency, as it makes plain what Sweden's priorities are, and its work with open data. In addition, it helps to clarify the purpose and benefits of sharing data, and how open data can promote societal development.

- Responsible actor: Government Offices (Ministry of Finance).
- Implementation date: During the first half of 2023.

- Relates to the OGP principles concerning: Transparency, technology and innovation.

6.2 Commitment 2: Dedicated point of contact for and implementation of the ODC principles

In addition to the formal adoption of the ODC principles, practical and operational work is needed to implement the six principles contained in the Charter. These principles provide guidance for how members can work more actively to help increase the availability of open data as well as increasing the usability of open data. To this end, a national government actor will be designated as the point of contact and be responsible for the implementation of the principles.

The Government therefore intends to appoint DIGG as the national point of contact, with the task among others of being responsible for the implementation of the ODC principles. Furthermore, the Government also intends that, within the framework of this task, DIGG will develop targeted activities to increase knowledge about and the dissemination of the principles and for follow-up of the principles.

- Responsible actor: DIGG.
- Reporting date: No later than 16 May 2025.
- Relates to the OGP principles concerning: Transparency, technology and innovation.

6.3 Commitment 3: Purchasing data

There is a need for important data sets to be made open and available, especially purchasing data, to increase transparency in public administration. Developing efforts on this issue would create a significant degree of openness and transparency in public administration. Access to purchasing data also combats corruption by increasing transparency around public sector purchasing.

Therefore, DIGG has been tasked with promoting the development of open access to purchasing data.

- Responsible actor: DIGG.
- Reporting date: No later than 16 May 2025.
- Relates to the OGP principles concerning: Transparency, technology and innovation.

6.4 Commitment 4: Develop anti-corruption work

The ability to combat corruption is important for citizens' confidence in public administration. The anti-corruption action plan has laid the foundations for a coherent and structured approach to combating corruption in public administration. The Government

intends to develop its anti-corruption work and will analyse developments at all levels of public administration.

- Responsible actor: Government Offices (Ministry of Finance).
- Date of implementation: Information on progress in the fight against corruption will be communicated to the consultation group on an ongoing basis.
- Relates to the OGP principles concerning: Anti-corruption.

7. Documents and reporting

All decisions relating to OGP work moving forward, which include this Action Plan, the Government mandate to DIGG and measures to develop anti-corruption work, will be published on the Government's website.

Other documents produced in connection with these commitments will also be published on the Government's website, thus being made available to the public.