

SVESAM – A Coherent Development of Sweden

The Government Inquiry for the future Regional and
Rural Policy in Sweden

OECD seminar Island economies, 23 June 2025

Anna Hedberg, Inquiry Secretary

SVESAM –Assignment

- Proposal for the direction and design of future regional development policy and rural policy – structure and governance
- Links to EU cohesion and rural policies important
- Final report 1 June 2026 – can submit interim reports

Involved in the inquiry

- Group with experts (from national authorities, organisations, research) and advisers (from Government Offices)
- Reference group from civil society (11 organisations), e.g. Local Development Sweden, Federation of Swedish Farmers, Church of Sweden, National Association of the Archipelago...
- Many external contacts and meetings!

The importance of geography and location

- A basic premise is that geography and places matter
- May sound obvious – but is far from obvious in many cases
- Need to highlight and clarify needs and motives
- The argument is even stronger in troubled times

Main questions for the inquiry

- Responsibilities and tasks of state authorities, including county administrative boards, and regions within the policy areas?
- Identify obstacles and propose how coordination and cooperation between state authorities, regions and municipalities can be developed.
- Regional development policy *and* rural policy - or merge into a common policy area?

Also consider the balance between...

...working compensatory for national cohesion *and* for regional development.

Rural development in focus

The Government of Sweden:

“The development of rural areas is crucial to the success of Sweden. The conditions for living and working in rural areas must be strengthened”

SVESAM:

*What should a renewed policy focus on **to strengthen rural areas**?*

Rural areas are different

The Government of Sweden:

“The conditions of rural areas differ in different parts of the country and between different types of rural areas, e.g. rural areas with denser or sparser structures and rural areas close to or far from larger population concentrations. Islands and archipelagos have special conditions.”

SVESAM:

How can we design a policy that effectively provides good conditions for sustainable development in different types of rural areas, as well as islands and archipelagos?

Increased clarity, strengthened cooperation

- Interim report in June 2025 – ongoing work and continued focus
- The importance of a place-based and a territorial approach
- Joint responsibility for regional and rural development, for the state (including government, authorities, regional administrative boards) and the regions.
- Responsibilities and governance needs to be clearer!
- The importance of coordination and cooperation – including civil society and businesses/enterprise sector
- Rural areas in special focus, including islands and archipelagos