



**Government Offices
of Sweden**

Questionnaire for Governments on resolution 27/23, “implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes”

Introduction to the answers given below

The overall goal of Swedish environmental policy is to hand over to the next generation a society in which the major environmental problems have been solved, without increasing environmental and health problems outside Sweden's borders. This is the generational goal, which serves to guide environmental action in Sweden. It has been adopted by the Swedish parliament, along with 16 environmental quality objectives covering different areas.

One of the 16 environmental quality objectives is called *a non-toxic environment*. Within the framework of *a non-toxic environment* the Swedish government in December 2010 assigned the Swedish Chemicals Agency with the task to develop and implement an *action plan for a toxic-free everyday environment* for the years 2011 – 2014. This action plan has been prolonged to 2020. For the time being about 35 million Swedish kronor are put into the action plan each year. The focus of the action plan is to protect fetuses and children.

Answers to specific questions

1. There are several on-going activities to monitor exposure to hazardous substances in Sweden. Most of these activities are not exclusively set up to monitor children's exposure but they provide important information in that respect also. More information can be found on the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) web site.
 - a. The Swedish Pollutant Release and Transfer Register contains data on the quantities of certain chemical substances that large facilities emit annually. This register is part of the work of meeting the public's right to information about national emissions of pollutants.
 - b. Sweden has an extensive system to monitor the country's environmental status. The State and changes in the environment is documented by the Swedish environmental monitoring, coordinated by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. So-called screening program are used in order to determine if certain chemical substances may cause health and environmental problems. In these programs a specific group of substances or the total situation of pollution in an area may be studied.
 - c. Programme area for health-related environmental monitoring (HÄMI) include long-term monitoring of the chemical environmental factors that may affect human health. A number of development projects are in progress within the framework of this programme

area. In 2014-2015 for example levels of perfluorinated chemicals in various human matrices are studied.

2. Sweden is a member of the European Union (EU). The EU-legislation on chemicals is to a great extent harmonized between the member states. On many occasions, both on the political level and on the technical level, Sweden has argued for a more stringent legislation in order to protect children. Some examples:
 - The need to quickly develop and adopt criteria for identifying endocrine disrupting substances,
 - The need to develop toxicological test regimes, risk assessment methods, additional assessment factors and so on to better protect children,
 - People's right-to-know the content of hazardous substances in chemical products and articles.
3. Within the framework of the action plan for a toxic-free everyday environment different actions are taken to reduce childhood exposure to hazardous substances. Some examples:
 - The Swedish Chemicals Agency has initiated a national network with regional and local authorities in order to stimulate actions to reduce childhood exposure in areas such as construction and building, public procurement and information to the citizen
 - Green public procurement of articles has been identified as a particular important policy instrument for achieving reduced exposure. The National Agency for Public Procurement, in cooperation with the Swedish Chemicals Agency, has developed requirements to avoid unnecessary exposure from chemicals in chemical product and in articles. Requirements have been developed for several areas including "toxic-free preschools".
 - The Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation, in cooperation with the Swedish Chemicals Agency, has different activities in many preschools and schools all around the country in order to learn teachers more about everyday chemical risks and make it a part of schools' teaching programmes.
4. The actions of the Swedish government has primarily focused on preventive measures. There are in many cases "causation obstacles" built into the EU chemicals legislation. From our point of view the precautionary principle should in a more clear way be the guiding principle of the legislation. If that was the case it would probably also be easier to claim probable causation between an early exposure in life and an illness observed many years later. (see also answer to question 2)
5. To our knowledge there has not been any such court cases in Sweden. We would again like to emphasise the need for preventive measures. The Swedish

government has sued the European Commission for breaching EU law by failing to publish a definition for endocrine disruptors. The European Court ruled that the Commission is illegally delaying a crucial decision to protect EU citizens and the environment.