

Dressed for success?

Evaluation of Sweden's readiness to influence the European Commission's and other EU member states' actions in development cooperation at the field level

The Swedish Government is committed to influence the development cooperation of other EU member states and the European Commission. SADEV shows that the Swedish field offices are well aware of this commitment but that the ability to obtain influence is limited by the absence of clear instructions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Sida, insufficient internal organisation of the field offices and inadequate management of human resources for the field offices. The evaluation presents recommendations on what the MFA and Sida can do to more effectively influence other EU member states and the Commission at the field level.

Influence on other EU member states and on the European Commission is identified as a priority by the Swedish Government as a means to gain recognition for Swedish priorities.

As a member of the European Union (EU), Sweden has the opportunity to influence one of the largest actors on the international development arena. The Swedish Government has declared its commitment to seize this opportunity as a means to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of other EU member states' and the Commission's development cooperation and their focus on creating conditions that will enable poor people to improve their lives.

SADEV presents the findings of its evaluation of to what extent the Swedish field offices are instructed and organised to meet this commitment.

The evaluation also provides recommendations on what can be done to increase the Swedish field offices' influence on field representatives of other EU member states and the Commission.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SADEV's conclusions and recommendations cover three areas, which are considered vital to effectively gain influence within the EU.

(i) Instructions from the MFA and Sida to the field offices

SADEV concludes that the instructions from the MFA and Sida are unclear on a number of issues.

SADEV's recommendations to the MFA therefore include:

- Clarify whom within the EU to influence.
- Clarify the priority between efforts to influence representatives of other EU member states and the Commission on the one hand and representatives of other donors on the other hand.

How can the Swedish field offices increase their influence on the actions in development cooperation by representatives of other EU member states and of the Commission at the field level?

Whereas occasional efforts are made to promote knowledge on how other EU member states and the Commission work and how they can be influenced, these efforts are not guided by a systematic and strategic agenda.

SADEV also provides detailed recommendations on how the MFA and Sida can clarify their instructions on *how* the field offices should work to obtain influence within the EU at field level.

(ii) Internal organisation of the field offices

SADEV concludes that the internal organisation of the field offices is only to a limited extent designed to successfully increase their influence within the EU at the field level.

SADEV calls on Sida to generate a systematic and strategic approach to influence representatives of other EU member states and the Commission. The specific recommendations to Sida include:

- Establish a process to develop a well defined agenda that reflects the government's goal in relations to other EU member states and with the Commission.
- Stipulate when during other EU member states' and the Commission's development work processes the attempts to gain influence should occur and how these attempts could be organised.
- Make sure that a systematic and strategic approach is reflected in essential internal steering instruments at the field offices.

(iii) Human resources management for the field offices

SADEV found that many Swedish field officials are widely respected within the EU framework for their technical knowledge and for being active and constructive partners in cooperative endeavors. However, SADEV concludes that their individual *ad hoc* efforts are not enough to effectively influence on EU at the field level.

SADEV's recommendations to Sida therefore include the development of a systematic and strategic approach for the human resources management for the field offices. In this approach Sida should:

- Clarify the mandate of different kinds of officers within the organisation with regard to unilateral design and make prioritisations among working methods to obtain influence.
- Make sure that adequate financial and human resources are available for the influence work.
- Increase the value of knowledge and skills that can increase Sweden's influence when recruiting new personnel.
- Increase the knowledge about the organisation of other EU member states and the Commission and on how their representatives can be influenced.

SOURCE AND FURTHER INFORMATION

This SADEV brief is based on *Dressed for Success? Evaluation of Sweden's readiness to influence the European Commission's and other EU member states' actions in development cooperation at the field level*, SADEV Report 2009:1.

This and other SADEV publication are available at www.sadev.se