

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)

A PRESENTATION



Swedish Association
of Local Authorities
and Regions

MISSION STATEMENT



SALAR is an employer's organization for municipalities, county councils and regions. We look after the interests of our members and offer them support and services.

We raise issues, act decisively and enlighten public opinion.

Our mission is to provide municipalities, county councils and regions with better conditions for local and regional self-government.

Our vision is to develop the welfare system and its services.

It's a matter of democracy.



THE DEMOCRATIC LEVELS IN SWEDEN

Sweden is divided into 290 municipalities, 18 county councils and two regions. There is no hierarchical relation between municipalities, county councils and regions, since all have their own self-governing local authorities. Parliament (Riksdagen) is the supreme political decision-making body in Sweden.

The current Local Government Act, which came into force in 1992, defines the roles of municipalities and county councils/regions as follows:

- Municipalities are responsible for matters relating to the inhabitants of the municipality and their immediate environment.
- The main task of the county councils and regions is the provision of healthcare.



WHO PROVIDES THE SERVICES?

In Sweden, the municipalities are responsible for a larger share of public services than in most other countries. Three quarters of the activities carried out by municipalities are related to childcare, school education and elderly care. Other examples of the municipalities' responsibilities are spatial planning, refuse collection and waste disposal and rescue services. The activities of the county councils and regions cover two main areas: healthcare and regional development.





WHAT DOES SALAR DO?

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) represents all Sweden's municipalities, county councils and regions. It acts as an employer's organization and promotes the interests of its members, for example by seeking to strengthen local self-government and by developing regional and local democracy. As an employer's organization, the Association concludes collective agreements that are binding on municipalities, county councils and regions.

SALAR signs collective agreements with the central trade union organizations representing more than 1.1 million employees, which makes it one of the largest employer's organizations in Sweden.

SALAR offers services and support for the development of activities, and aims to provide an arena for dialogue between its members and the outside world. Its ambition is to develop self-government in order to give members greater scope for action.



SALAR FACT FILE

The organization is politically controlled. The members appoint 220 representatives to the Association's Congress, the highest decision-making body. The Congress meets every four years. It elects the Board, which is responsible for the activities of the Association. The daily work is led and coordinated by a Chief Executive and the administrative office is organised in eight divisions with a total workforce of 450. All municipalities, county councils and regions in Sweden are members of SALAR and membership is voluntary. The Association's operations are financed by fees paid annually by members in relation to their tax base. SALAR is independent to the Swedish government.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

The Association's international work is linked to three main goals:

- 1 Safeguarding our members' interests
- 2 Intelligence gathering
- 3 Promoting local and regional democracy

The European Union directly or indirectly influences between 60-70 percent of the items on local and regional assembly agendas. The issues may vary from European legislation concerning public procurement, the environment or food safety.

The Association therefore aims to become a visible force in European politics. Mainstreaming the international perspective into the Association's daily work is an important element of this effort. All experts at SALAR look after the interests of the members and attempt to influence policy initiatives in the EU at an early stage. The EU perspective is coordinated by the international section, which is based in both Stockholm and in Brussels, as well as by the EU coordinators in the Association's different departments. SALAR also supports the members in their international work, and offers various platforms for exchanges of experience and best practice.

SALAR has a broad network of international relations and is a member of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) as well as of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).





SKL INTERNATIONAL

SKL International is a company that supports the development of local government systems in new democracies and developing countries. It focuses on developing well-functioning local and regional administrations, which are founded on the principles of good governance. This includes support for the development of associations of local authorities.

SKL International's approach is based on identifying elements of the Swedish experience that can be appropriately adapted to local conditions in other countries. Its interventions are geared to decentralised, democratic and transparent governance.

SKL International is owned by SALAR. The work is demand-driven and result-oriented. Typically, project financing comes from international development donors.

More information is available on SKL International's website www.sklinternational.se.



ICLD

The Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) is an organization linked to SALAR, which has a majority on the Centre's board. The Centre's main objective is to fight poverty by promoting democracy and democratic processes in local society. Its efforts are focused on the developing countries designated as Sida's priority partner countries. The ICLD combines theory and practice by using and building on Swedish and international research on local democracy and the experience and knowledge that exists in municipalities, county councils and regions. The Centre's activities, which are funded by Sida, cover three main areas: learning and capacity-building, Municipal Partnerships and international education programmes. More information is available on the ICLD's website www.icld.se/eng.

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions is located in central Stockholm at Hornsgatan 20.

For more information on the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions please visit www.salar.eu or www.skl.se

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