

A Swedish National Re-Examination of Water Operations

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SUMMARY

Sweden will implement the EU Water Directive (2000/60/EC) and, according to a cross-party agreement reached in 2016, Sweden also aims to achieve 100 percent renewable electricity production by 2040.

To clarify the implementation of the directive and to implement the hydropower related parts of the energy agreement, new legislation was introduced as of January 1, 2019, implying among other things that every actor who carries out water operations (“vattenverksamheter”) to produce hydroelectric power must provide the operations with permits containing modern environmental conditions.

This will be done by reviewing the operations in the Land and Environmental courts at the initiative of the operator. There are approximately 2 000 hydropower plants in Sweden today, of which just over 200 with an output of over 10 megawatts. The number of operations in need for re-examination, which is not limited to power plants, has been estimated to at least 7 400. To ensure a coordinated effort, with the greatest possible environmental benefits while ensuring national efficient access to hydroelectric power, a proposal for a national plan for re-examinations covering some 2 400 operations has been compiled by relevant authorities and submitted to the government for approval as of October 1, 2019.

The re-examinations will put pressure on the Land and Environmental courts and other actors involved. It will also involve delicate considerations between the need for reconsideration for the benefit of the environment and the issue of a secure and stable electricity supply. The latter issue has received increased domestic attention during 2019 as a result of, among other things, strong growth in urban areas and a lack of capacity in the transmission of electricity between different

parts of the country.

The objective of this paper is to present an overview of the current proceedings for the national re-examination of Swedish water operations.

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