

Improving the quality of multi-level governance and strengthening the
resilience of island economies of Croatia, Greece, and Sweden

TSI - MCP/23EL34

Toolkit to strengthen island-specific policymaking and island-proof national policies in Sweden

A strategic framework for Sweden's islands

18 November 2025



Table of contents

Key messages	4
1. Toolkit to strengthen island-specific policymaking	5
1.1 Introduction	5
1.2 The case for island-specific policymaking	6
1.2.1 Unique characteristics of island territories	6
1.2.2 Policy gaps and key challenges	10
1.2.3 Towards an islands policy roadmap	12
1.3 Strengthening the evidence base for decision-making	13
1.3.1 Data requirements for island development	13
1.3.2 Existing data gaps in island statistics	14
1.3.3 Methodological and logistical challenges	16
1.4 Governance and policy integration for islands	17
1.4.1 Building capacity of island governance	17
1.4.2 Embedding island perspectives into policy	19
1.4.3 Checklist for island proofing	20
References	24
Annex A. Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) Template	25
Annex B. Island Data Framework	34
Annex C. Governance and Coordination Mechanisms	37
Annex D. Indicators for Island Proofing	40
Annex E. Implementation Roadmap (2025-2030)	42

FIGURES

Figure 1.1. STAR drivers of island growth	9
Figure 1.2. National policy sensitivity to island conditions in Sweden	11
Figure 1.3. A stepwise roadmap for developing an integrated island policy framework	13
Figure 1.4. Overview of Institutions and Mechanisms	23
Figure A.1. Applying the ICIA checklist	29

TABLES

Table 1.1. Common typologies and dimensions for classifying islands	7
Table 1.2. Diversity of island governance and connectivity	8
Table 1.3. Island Data Roadmap	15

Table A.1. Short-form and full ICIA	26
Table A.2. Screening Checklist	27
Table A.3. ICIA Summary Template	27
Table A.4. ICIA Summary Template – Example: Transport Accessibility	28
Table B.1. Governance structure	34
Table B.2. Data domains	35
Table B.3. Data sources	35
Table B.4. Structure review process	36
Table C.1. Institutional roles and responsibilities	37
Table D.1. Key Performance Indicators for Island Development Monitoring	40
Table E.1. Implementation roadmap	42

BOXES

Box 1.1. Sweden island typology snapshot	8
Box 1.2 Tailored policy approaches in practice	12
Box 1.3. Developing island typologies	16
Box 1.4. Strengthening island governance	18
Box 1.5. Reusing evidence so every assessment isn't a new data project	22

Key messages

1. **Integrate islands as distinct territories within national and regional policymaking.** Their geographic isolation, demographic patterns, and economic structures require tailored policy approaches. Mainstream policies designed for urban or mainland contexts rarely address island realities effectively. Recognising insularity as a unique territorial characteristic is a necessary first step toward better policy outcomes.
 - **Policy implication:** Islands should be explicitly recognised in Sweden's regional-development, transport, and climate frameworks as a distinct territorial category, triggering island-proofing reviews for all relevant policies.
2. **Build a robust evidence base as the foundation for effective policy.** Policy design and evaluation depend on better data – including island-level indicators, seasonal dynamics, connectivity, service access, and population changes. Addressing data gaps and methodological challenges is critical, as is combining quantitative data with qualitative insights from local stakeholders.
 - **Policy implication:** Establish an *Island Data Framework* coordinated by Statistics Sweden (SCB) and the Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis to collect disaggregated data, harmonise island indicators, and publish an annual *State of the Islands Report*, benchmarking progress against mainland and peer islands.
3. **Design policy tools that systematically embed island consideration.** *Island proofing* should be institutionalised as a standard step in policymaking, ensuring that the potential impacts on islands are consistently assessed rather than considered on a case-by-case basis. Tools such as checklists, impact assessments, and stakeholder engagement mechanisms can help ensure that potential impacts on islands are identified early and addressed before policies are implemented.
 - **Policy implication:** Introduce a mandatory *Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)* template within Sweden's existing Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) process, ensuring that all legislative and budget proposals affecting transport, housing, digital, or environmental policy explicitly evaluate island impacts before adoption.
4. **Connect governance levels and strengthen institutional capacity.** Island policymaking requires coordination between local, regional and national actors. Many municipalities need targeted support, including technical expertise, training and dedicated structures, to plan strategically, manage complex projects and participate effectively in policy processes.
 - **Policy implication:** Create a *National Island Coordination Unit (NICU)* within the Government Offices of Sweden to lead policy coherence, convene ministries, and support island municipalities through targeted capacity-building and technical assistance.
5. **Learn through collaboration and continuous improvement.** Many challenges, such as improving seasonal data collection, developing island typologies or integrating new evidence into policymaking, require sustained collaboration between statistical agencies, ministries, municipalities and research institutions. Piloting solutions, refining methods through feedback and building shared institutional knowledge will be key to long-term success.
 - **Policy implication:** Institutionalise multi-level learning through an annual *Island Policy Forum* bringing together national agencies, Region Gotland, archipelago municipalities, academia, and civil society to review ICIA results and co-design continuous improvements.

1. Toolkit to strengthen island-specific policymaking

What is island proofing and how to use this toolkit

What is island proofing?

Island proofing refers to the systematic consideration of island conditions, needs, and impacts in the development and implementation of public policies by relevant authorities, with the aim of improving outcomes for island communities.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is designed for policymakers and practitioners at national, regional, and local levels who are responsible for designing or implementing policies that affect island territories. It provides practical guidance on how to:

- Integrate an island lens into policy design, planning, and evaluation processes.
- Identify and address data gaps that limit evidence-based decision-making.
- Coordinate effectively across levels of government and with local stakeholders.
- Apply the island proofing approach at different stages of the policy cycle.

When and why to apply it

The toolkit can be used at the start of new policy design processes, during programme reviews, or when adapting existing measures that affect island communities. It helps ensure that island perspectives are systematically included in decision-making, leading to more equitable, resilient, and effective policies.

What the Toolkit produces

Applying the toolkit results in clearer, evidence-based assessments of how policies impact island communities. These “island-proofing assessments” can guide policymakers in adjusting proposals before implementation, promoting better outcomes and more efficient use of resources.

1.1 Introduction

Islands form an integral part of Sweden’s territorial, economic, and cultural landscape. They contribute to biodiversity protection, renewable energy development, and local food production, while playing a vital role in regional identity and cohesion. Yet these same characteristics shape development on islands in ways that set them apart from the mainland. Geographic remoteness, small and ageing populations, and

pronounced seasonal fluctuations combine to raise the cost of infrastructure, service provision, and connectivity. These conditions limit access to essential services, economic opportunities, and markets – constraining the ability of island communities to sustain growth and well-being. These structural dynamics also interact with governance complexity – many islands fall under mainland municipalities – creating challenges for accountability, planning, and access to national investment instruments.

At the same time, islands offer significant opportunities in green innovation, sustainable tourism, and the bioeconomy, all of which can drive local development and strengthen regional economies. Their unique characteristics also make them well positioned to pioneer solutions for circular business models and community-led approaches to service provision. Unlocking this potential requires policy frameworks that are tailored to the diversity of island contexts and designed to strengthen local capacity, coordination, and long-term investment. Embedding island considerations into Sweden's national strategies for regional growth, innovation, and climate adaptation is key to harnessing these advantages.

This toolkit aims to support more effective, data-driven, and inclusive policymaking for island regions in Sweden and across the EU. It does so by embedding *island proofing*, the systematic integration of island perspectives into policy design and implementation, across national, regional, and local levels of government. The toolkit seeks to strengthen the resilience and visibility of island economies, ensure their integration into policy frameworks, and improve the use of reliable and comparable data for decision-making.

The document forms part of the OECD project *Improving the quality of multi-level governance and strengthening the resilience of island economies in Croatia, Greece, and Sweden*, implemented with the European Commission's DG REFORM and supported by the EU Technical Support Instrument (TSI). It builds on growing recognition by EU institutions and national governments of the need for place-based policy tools that reflect the specific conditions of islands and enable them to contribute fully to national and regional development objectives.

1.2 The case for island-specific policymaking

1.2.1 Unique characteristics of island territories

Designing place-based policies for islands requires a clear understanding of the structural characteristics that set them apart from other territories and shape their opportunities and constraints. While islands differ widely in geography, population size, and economic structure, many share features – such as limited market size, narrow economic bases, and demographic pressures – that make them less diversified and more vulnerable to external shocks.

These structural realities affect many aspects of island life. They shape how local governments work, how communities organise themselves, and how policies are planned and delivered. Limited administrative capacity, overlapping responsibilities, and reliance on connections beyond the island can all influence how islands interact with the wider national and global economy. Without deliberate coordination mechanisms and targeted support, fragmented governance increases transaction costs, weakens accountability, and limits innovation potential. Over time, these challenges increase the costs that island economies face and make it harder for them to adapt and grow.

While these dynamics differ across territories, islands can be grouped along several common dimensions that shape their development potential and policy needs. Table 1.1 summarises key criteria commonly used to classify islands, including land area, population size, connectivity, governance, economic function and urban endowments. Box 1.1 illustrates how these dimensions apply in the Swedish context.

Table 1.1. Common typologies and dimensions for classifying islands

Key criteria used internationally to distinguish between different types of islands for statistical and policy purposes

Dimension	Categories	Policy relevance	Source
<i>Land area</i>	• Large islands: More than 100 km² • Medium-sized islands: Between 10 and 100 km² • Small islands: Less than 10 km²	Smaller islands face stronger land-use pressures, limited space for housing or infrastructure, and higher exposure to environmental risks, while larger islands can accommodate broader economic activity and more diverse land uses.	Author's elaboration based on an internal OECD report (OECD, unpublished ^[11])
<i>Population size</i>	• Large islands: More than 50 000 permanent inhabitants (<i>15 islands in the EU</i>) • Medium-sized islands: Between 5 000 and 50 000 permanent inhabitants (<i>44 islands in the EU</i>) • Small islands: Between 50 and 5 000 permanent inhabitants (<i>303 islands in the EU</i>) • Very small islands: Fewer than 50 permanent inhabitants (<i>228 islands in the EU</i>)	Smaller islands often face higher service costs and limited labour markets, while larger ones can sustain broader governance and economic functions.	(ESPON, 2013 ^[2])
<i>Proximity to mainland</i>	• Peri-continental islands: Less than 22.2 km (12 nautical miles) from coast • Open-ocean islands: More than 22.2 km from coast	Islands nearer to the mainland benefit from stronger market linkages and easier service access, while remote islands face higher transport costs, isolation risks, and greater reliance on local resources.	(Depraetere and Dahl, 2007 ^[3])
<i>Governance status</i>	• Independent island municipality: Island governed by its own local authority with full municipal responsibilities. • Part of mainland municipality: Island administered as part of a mainland local government, often limiting island-specific decision-making. • Multi-island municipality: Municipality comprising several islands, requiring coordination across dispersed territories. • Island region: Autonomous regional government covering one or several islands with broader political, fiscal, and administrative powers. • Island state: Sovereign island country with full national governance authority (e.g. Malta, Iceland).	Governance structure influences fiscal capacity, decision-making authority, and coordination with national policies. Islands integrated into mainland municipalities often face limited autonomy, while independent or regional island administrations can better tailor local strategies.	Author's elaboration based on an internal OECD report (OECD, unpublished ^[11])
<i>Economic function</i>	• Tourism-based islands: e.g. Ionian islands • Primary sector-based islands: e.g. Crete • Manufacturing-based islands: e.g. Sardinia, Malta • Knowledge-intensive or service-oriented islands: e.g. Sicily, Hong Kong	Islands' dominant economic sectors shape employment, innovation potential, and exposure to shocks. Knowledge- and service-oriented islands benefit from stronger value creation and innovation linkages, while those dependent on tourism or primary industries face higher vulnerability to seasonality and external demand fluctuations.	(ESPON, 2019 ^[4])
<i>Accessibility to services (urban endowments)</i>	• Islands with own urban system: e.g. Sicily • Islands with mainland city's influence: e.g. coastal islands in Croatia • Archipelago and other forms of double insularity: e.g. Gozo (Malta's sister island) or Greece's insular space where many smaller islands act as satellites of bigger ones and depend upon them much more than on the mainland	Islands with their own urban system often benefit from stronger infrastructure and services, whereas archipelagos or satellites of larger islands face logistical constraints, weaker market linkages, and higher dependency on external centres.	(ESPON, 2019 ^[4])

Note: The typology is illustrative and combines commonly used dimensions of island classification, including land area, population size, connectivity, governance, economic function and urban endowments, to support policy analysis.

Box 1.1. Sweden island typology snapshot

Sweden's islands vary widely in their governance arrangements, accessibility, and administrative roles (see Table 1.2). Gotland functions as a self-governing island region with full municipal responsibilities. Öckerö is an independent island municipality closely integrated with the Gothenburg metropolitan area. Many other islands, particularly in archipelagos such as Stockholm or Västra Götaland, are administratively part of mainland municipalities and depend on them for service provision and infrastructure. This diversity underlines the importance of differentiated policy approaches that reflect varying degrees of autonomy, accessibility, and local capacity.

Table 1.2. Diversity of island governance and connectivity

Examples of governance and connectivity arrangements across Swedish islands

Island type	Examples	Governance status	Connectivity	Policy implications
<i>Self-governing island region</i>	Gotland	Independent regional and municipal authority	Fixed ferry and air connections	Strong administrative capacity, strategic autonomy
<i>Independent island municipality</i>	Öckerö	Own local government, within metropolitan area	Bridge and ferry links to Gothenburg	Strong integration, shared regional planning
<i>Islands with fixed connection</i>	Orust, Tjörn	Connected by bridges or causeways	Permanent road connection	Face some island challenges but less isolated
<i>Dependent island (archipelagos)</i>	Stockholm archipelago, Västra Götaland islands	Part of mainland municipalities	Limited ferry or seasonal access	High service delivery costs, limited autonomy

Note: The examples refer to islands as they are commonly understood in Sweden, illustrating how governance arrangements differ across geographically defined islands. The analysis draws on insights from an internal OECD synthesis report on Sweden (OECD, unpublished^[11]).

These structural dimensions translate into a set of common development constraints that shape how islands interact with wider economic systems. They underpin many of the challenges discussed above and have important implications for policymaking:

- **Economic structure:** Small market size, limited diversification, and reliance on a narrow set of sectors (e.g. tourism, fisheries) increase vulnerability to external shocks.
- **Connectivity and costs:** Geographic isolation leads to higher transport, infrastructure, and service delivery costs, as well as logistical challenges in accessing goods, markets, and services.
- **Labour and skills:** Demographic ageing, outmigration, and difficulties in attracting or retaining skilled labour constrain economic development and innovation.
- **Environmental pressures:** Greater exposure to climate change impacts, natural hazards, and complex land, water, and waste management issues.
- **Institutional constraints:** Higher per-capita service costs, limited administrative capacity, and governance arrangements that can reduce coordination and innovation.

Yet these same features also create opportunities for innovation – small scale allows policy experimentation, proximity fosters community trust, and natural capital offers comparative advantages for green and blue-economy development. In line with the OECD's *STAR framework* of rural economic growth (OECD, 2025^[5]), these opportunities can be grouped into four interrelated drivers: Specific assets, Tradeable specialisation, Access to urban markets and linkages, and Resources (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1. STAR drivers of island growth

The STAR framework highlights four interrelated drivers that underpin island development opportunities



Source: Adapted from the OECD report *Reinforcing Rural Resilience* (OECD, 2025^[5]).

While the framework was originally developed to capture the drivers of rural economic growth, its underlying logic also applies to islands. Although islands differ from other rural areas in important ways, including their geographic isolation, higher transport costs, and distinct governance and service delivery challenges, they share similar structural conditions such as small scale, limited connectivity, and exposure to external shocks. Building on these shared characteristics, the same mechanisms that enable rural regions to turn local assets, specialisations, and linkages into engines of transformation also operate on islands. Applying the STAR lens therefore helps translate the distinctive features of island territories into engines of sustainable development:

- **Specific assets of islands:** Unique landscapes, biodiversity, and cultural heritage underpin tourism, recreation, and quality-of-life advantages. Harnessing these distinctive assets can also support innovation in sustainable housing, cultural industries, and local value chains that strengthen island identity and attractiveness.
- **Tradeable specialisation:** Islands can enhance competitiveness by developing tradeable sectors suited to their geography and resources – such as renewable energy technologies, high-value food production, and blue-economy activities linked to global markets. Emphasis on quality, niche branding, and circular production can help overcome small-scale constraints.
- **Access to urban markets and linkages:** Improved physical and digital connectivity with mainland urban centres expands access to services, innovation networks, and investment opportunities. Strengthening these linkages allows islands to benefit from knowledge exchange and demand spillovers while maintaining their local distinctiveness.
- **Resources and transitions:** Islands' natural and marine resources, combined with strong community networks, provide a platform for leading the green and digital transitions. Strategic deployment of renewable energy, clean transport, and digital infrastructure can drive diversification, resilience, and local empowerment.

1.2.2 Policy gaps and key challenges

While islands and rural areas share similar structural mechanisms for economic transformation, their policy needs differ. Islands face distinct governance, connectivity, and service delivery challenges that require tailored approaches and explicit recognition in policy design. Yet despite these distinctive characteristics, islands often remain largely invisible in national strategies.

Many countries have developed comprehensive frameworks for rural development. In Sweden, for example, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (*Tillväxtverket*) coordinates a national network for regional and rural policy across more than 20 authorities and promotes a stronger rural perspective through practical tools, learning examples, and guidance.

While such frameworks exist for rural areas, few countries explicitly recognise islands as a distinct territorial category. Their specific circumstances and needs are frequently treated as equivalent to those of remote rural regions, leading to policies that overlook structural differences. As a result, national and regional policies often fail to address island-specific challenges such as seasonality, connectivity gaps, higher service delivery costs, and limited administrative capacity to access national programmes.

A comprehensive island policy framework should therefore rest on three complementary actions:

1. **Recognise islands as a distinct territorial category.** Islands should be formally acknowledged as a distinct territorial category within national and regional strategies. Treating them as simply peripheral or rural territories risks reinforcing structural inequalities and leaving their development potential untapped. Several countries have already taken this step, such as Scotland, Croatia, and Finland through their respective *Islands Acts*.
2. **Adopt tailored, place-based approaches.** Such approaches must respond to islands' geographic, economic, social, and governance conditions. Applying standardised policy tools, such as population density criteria for regional support, often fails to capture the realities of insularity, where remoteness, seasonality, and high service delivery costs can persist even in areas with moderate population density.
3. **Embed island-sensitive governance mechanisms.** Such mechanisms should be integrated across government to ensure coherence between national, regional, and local levels. A national island-proofing duty, supported by an *Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)* process, should ensure that potential island impacts are systematically considered in policy design and implementation.

Developing and implementing such tailored responses is not without challenges. Limited administrative capacity, small populations, and fragmented governance often make it difficult for islands to plan strategically, coordinate across different levels of government, and mobilise the resources needed to achieve long-term development goals. Policy design is further constrained by significant data gaps, as island regions are often absent from national and regional datasets, limiting the ability to measure performance or design evidence-based interventions. Addressing these barriers also requires a more nuanced understanding of island diversity. Developing typologies that capture differences in size, connectivity, economic structure, and function can help ensure that policy approaches are appropriately targeted and coordinated.

At present, several policy gaps remain in how national frameworks reflect the realities of island territories. Many national policies lack island sensitivity across key domains, and even where islands are considered, integration could be further strengthened (see Figure 1.2). The mapping shows that while some sectors such as transport, where island connectivity is explicitly addressed, incorporate island needs, most remain governed by general policies without adjustments for the structural and cost-related conditions of insularity.

Figure 1.2. National policy sensitivity to island conditions in Sweden

Integration of island perspectives in major national policy domains

	Policy area	Description
	TRANSPORT	National transport frameworks explicitly consider island connectivity through the Swedish Transport Administration's ferry network and regional mobility planning.
	ENERGY	Energy transition projects include islands (e.g. <i>Energy Pilot Gotland</i>), though no national framework specifically targets island energy resilience.
	DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY	Universal access goals under Sweden's <i>Digital Strategy 2025</i> extend to islands, but no dedicated island provisions or cost adjustments exist.
	WATER & WASTE	Local and regional initiatives address island-specific issues, but there is no overarching national policy for water and waste management on islands.
	EDUCATION	Island schools face staffing and consolidation challenges similar to rural areas, but there is no island-specific education policy.
	HEALTH	Health policy is managed at the regional level, with access gaps persisting for island residents, particularly in emergency and specialist care.

Note: The assessment illustrates the degree to which island-specific needs are addressed across key national policy domains. Green indicates policies that explicitly incorporate island considerations; orange reflects partial or indirect inclusion (e.g. through rural or regional frameworks); red denotes limited or no island-specific provisions.

Sweden has a number of initiatives that partially address these issues within existing national and regional frameworks. In transport policy, the Swedish Transport Administration (*Trafikverket*) and its ferry network (*Färjerederiet*), together with the *National Transport Plan 2022–2033*, acknowledge and operationally support island connectivity, providing dedicated funding for archipelago ferry routes and related infrastructure as part of Sweden's broader regional accessibility objectives. In the energy domain, projects such as *Energy Pilot Gotland*, supported by the Swedish Energy Agency (*Energimyndigheten*), demonstrate how national transition programmes like *The Climate Leap (Klimatklivet)* and *The Industrial Leap (Industriklivet)* can be adapted to island contexts, though no overarching framework yet targets small-scale energy resilience in archipelagos. Digital policy also indirectly supports islands through broadband expansion measures managed by the Swedish Post and Telecom Authority (*PTS*), including *The Broadband Lift (Bredbandslyftet)* and *Broadband Expansion Support (Stöd till bredbandsutbyggnad)*, yet these lack provisions to offset the higher costs of connectivity in remote island settings.

In other sectors, islands remain only marginally visible. Water and waste management are primarily municipal responsibilities, coordinated by county administrations and national agencies such as the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (*Naturvårdsverket*) and the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (*HaV*). While local initiatives like the *Stockholm Archipelago Sustainable Waste Partnership (Hållbar avfallshantering i Stockholms skärgård)* offer promising models for coordinated waste logistics and recycling across municipalities, no national framework addresses island-specific environmental management. In education and health, challenges mirror those of other remote areas –

small school sizes, staffing constraints, and limited specialist care. Distance-learning models supported by the National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) and e-health services under the *National eHealth Strategy (Vision eHälsa 2025)* help maintain access, but are not explicitly tailored to island conditions.

Overall, Sweden's existing frameworks already include important elements that could form the foundation for a more comprehensive island-sensitive approach. Strengthening coordination across these domains, improving the evidence base, and systematically assessing island impacts in national policies would be key next steps in advancing island-proof policymaking.

At the same time, progress is also emerging from the local level. While many islands still face significant policy gaps, individual cases show how locally tailored approaches can address structural constraints and unlock new opportunities. Box 1.2 presents two examples from Sweden. The experiences of Gotland and Öckerö illustrate how targeted strategies, partnerships and governance innovations can translate island-specific conditions into tangible development outcomes.

Box 1.2 Tailored policy approaches in practice

Gotland: Integrated planning for local needs

Gotland shows how a strategic, place-based approach can respond directly to several structural challenges faced by islands. Its *Our Gotland 2040* strategy aligns local priorities – including renewable energy, water management, skills provision and social inclusion – with national and EU policy frameworks. Initiatives such as the *Energy Pilot Gotland* project support the transition to clean energy and circular practices, while partnerships with the Swedish Public Employment Service strengthen local workforce skills for emerging sectors. Gotland has also invested in digital inclusion by expanding access to online services through projects like *DISA* and *Digital Elderly Care*, improving public service delivery for remote communities.

Öckerö: Partnerships to boost connectivity and capacity

Öckerö illustrates how small island municipalities can address policy gaps by embedding local planning in broader regional strategies and fostering strong citizen engagement. Its comprehensive plan is closely coordinated with Gothenburg's regional development strategy, improving physical connectivity and attracting investment. Community involvement is central to local policymaking, with mechanisms such as "island proposals" and regular dialogues strengthening citizen participation. Öckerö is also expanding digital infrastructure and diversifying its economy through a *blue economy innovation hub*, demonstrating how targeted, partnership-based initiatives can build resilience and generate new growth opportunities.

Source: The analysis draws on insights from an internal OECD synthesis report on Sweden (OECD, unpublished^[11]).

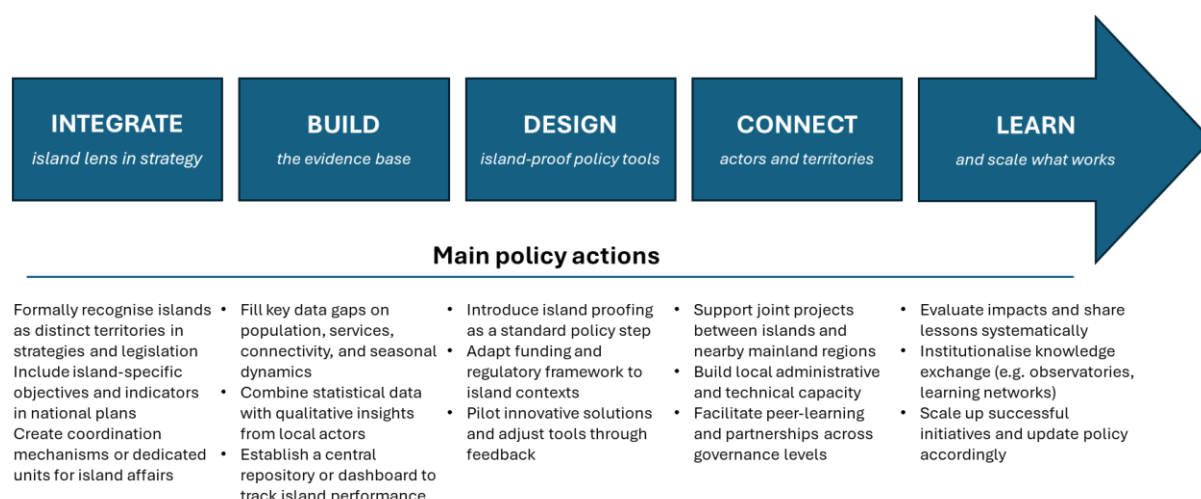
1.2.3 Towards an islands policy roadmap

Building on these insights, a more strategic and coordinated approach is needed to close existing policy gaps and unlock the full potential of island territories. This means moving beyond isolated initiatives to a coherent policy framework that combines recognition, robust evidence, targeted interventions, and strong cooperation across levels of government.

The island policy roadmap below summarises the key stages of such an approach (see Figure 1.3). It outlines a practical sequence of actions that governments can follow to integrate an island lens in policymaking, strengthen the evidence base, design island-proof policies, connect actors and territories, and learn from what works to adapt policy over time.

Figure 1.3. A stepwise roadmap for developing an integrated island policy framework

The roadmap illustrates five sequential steps for building stronger island policies



Note: The roadmap illustrates a stepwise approach to developing island-sensitive policies. The five steps correspond to the key messages outlined in the introductory section of this Toolkit and provide a framework for implementation.

The previous sections examined the unique characteristics of island territories and identified policy gaps and challenges, this roadmap focuses on the implementation pathway – that is, how to translate these findings into action. The five sequential steps represent a practical “how-to” for developing integrated island policies: *Integrate*, *Build*, *Design*, *Connect*, and *Learn*. Each step builds on the previous one, beginning with recognition of insularity and culminating in a continuous learning cycle that refines and scales effective measures (see Annex E).

1.3 Strengthening the evidence base for decision-making

1.3.1 Data requirements for island development

Effective island policymaking depends on the availability of granular, comparable and policy-relevant data. Yet such information is often lacking, which obscures the specific conditions, needs, and performance of islands and makes it difficult to design targeted policies, monitor progress, or evaluate outcomes effectively. Despite Sweden’s strong regional statistics (e.g. KOLADA), island-level visibility remains limited. Many islands are administratively nested within mainland municipalities, causing their demographic and economic signals to disappear in aggregate data. A structured national data framework is therefore essential to make insularity visible and actionable. Filling this gap could be facilitated by introducing an *Island Data Framework* (see Annex B) that captures the key dimensions of island development and allows progress to be tracked over time. A promising example comes from Croatia, where the *Island Development*

Indicators (IDI) provide an initial framework for systematically tracking social, economic, and environmental trends across all inhabited islands and informing evidence-based policymaking.

Data should be collected at least at “island or island-group” level and harmonised across agencies through common geocodes and metadata standards coordinated by Statistics Sweden (SCB). Key performance indicators (KPIs) should reflect the main areas of island development and resilience, covering governance, competitiveness, infrastructure, and sustainability. A proposed set of indicators, including definitions and data sources, is presented in Table D.1. These indicators should capture dimensions such as:

- **Strategic planning and initiatives:** Measure how local strategies align with island visions, coordinate with national policies, and engage key stakeholders.
- **Competitive landscape:** Track business creation, workforce skills, employment, and innovation dynamics in island economies.
- **Infrastructure and land use:** Assess investment levels, transportation efficiency, and digital connectivity that enable accessibility and economic activity.
- **Sustainability and quality of place:** Monitor environmental performance, renewable energy use, resource management, quality of life, and growth of green sectors.

However, measuring performance in isolation is not sufficient. To understand the effectiveness of policies and identify where support is most needed, island-level indicators should be benchmarked against both mainland regions (to assess relative disparities) and peer islands nationally and internationally (to identify good practices and performance gaps). Such comparative analysis is essential to guide policy priorities, inform resource allocation and support evidence-based decision-making.

1.3.2 Existing data gaps in island statistics

Despite several ongoing initiatives, the overall evidence system for islands is fragmented and lacks legal or procedural mandates for consistent reporting. These gaps limit the ability of policymakers to design targeted interventions, compare island performance with mainland regions, and monitor progress over time. The main challenges include:

- **Lack of harmonised island-level data:** There is currently no consistent framework for collecting and reporting data specifically for islands, making it difficult to assess their socio-economic conditions or compare performance across territories.
- **Limited statistical visibility:** In Sweden, more than 150 populated islands fall within 44 mainland municipalities (with the exception of Gotland and Öckerö), meaning that island-level data are rarely available. This masks local realities and prevents island-specific trends from being identified.
- **Absence of island-specific indicators:** Key dimensions such as ferry access, service costs, seasonal population fluctuations, energy resilience or infrastructure quality are rarely captured by existing data systems. These are critical for understanding the unique conditions and structural constraints faced by island communities.
- **No typology of islands based on size or accessibility:** The absence of a systematic classification hampers comparative analysis and tailored policymaking. This is partly due to difficulties in identifying which islands are physically connected to the mainland. While some municipalities collect highly granular local data, the lack of consistent definitions of island connectivity limits their comparability and use for national analysis.
- **Lack of complementary qualitative evidence:** Quantitative indicators alone do not capture the full picture of island life. Including survey-based data on residents’ perceptions, priorities and lived experiences would provide valuable insights into social dynamics and policy needs.

Table 1.3 presents a proposed Island Data Roadmap outlining practical steps, lead institutions, timelines, and resource needs to address these data gaps. It provides a structured approach for strengthening the evidence base on island development and improving data coordination across institutions.

Table 1.3. Island Data Roadmap

Practical steps to improve island-level data and analysis

Challenge	Actions	Lead institution(s)	Timeline	Resources required
<i>Lack of harmonised island-level data</i>	- Develop a national framework for collecting island-level statistics, for example by establishing a national <i>Island Data Framework</i> led by Statistics Sweden (SCB), defining data standards, responsible agencies, and update cycles. - Coordinate between national statistical offices, regional authorities and municipalities to ensure data compatibility and metadata consistency.	Statistics Sweden (SCB), National Data Service (SND), Ministry of Rural Affairs and Infrastructure	Short to medium term	- Dedicated funding for data harmonisation - Technical expertise for statistical integration - Inter-agency coordination capacity
<i>Limited statistical visibility</i>	- Create data disaggregation protocols that enable reporting below the municipal level (e.g. by island or settlement). - Encourage statistical agencies to publish open, geocoded data layers for small-area analysis	SCB, SND, municipal administrations	Medium term	- Analytical capacity - GIS infrastructure - IT resources for open-data publication
<i>Absence of island-specific indicators</i>	- Expand existing statistical surveys to include island-relevant variables (e.g. ferry access, seasonal population, energy resilience, service costs) - Develop new indicators with universities or island associations (e.g. connectivity reliability, seasonal-population ratio, service-cost index, renewable-energy share, water-balance indicator). - Compile these measures in a national <i>Island Indicator Catalogue</i>.	SCB, Ministry of Rural Affairs and Infrastructure, universities and island associations	Medium to long term	- Survey development funding - Research collaboration support - Stakeholder engagement resources
<i>No typology of islands based on size or accessibility</i>	- Define clear criteria for island typologies (size, population, connectivity) and align with international classifications (see Box 1.3). - Develop a <i>Swedish Island Typology</i> distinguishing permanently linked, ferry-dependent and isolated islands without scheduled links. - Use GIS tools to map and visualise typology results in an interactive dashboard.	SCB, Ministry of Rural Affairs and Infrastructure, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (HaV)	Short to medium term	- Technical and GIS expertise - Data-processing capacity - Funding for dashboard development
<i>Lack of complementary qualitative evidence</i>	- Combine quantitative datasets with surveys and focus groups to capture local experiences and community perspectives. - Integrate perception-based questions (e.g. accessibility, service quality, wellbeing) into existing monitoring frameworks such as <i>Medborgarundersökningen</i> (Citizen Survey).	SCB, municipal administrations, universities and research institutes, SALAR (SKR)	Medium term	- Funding for survey implementation - Stakeholder facilitation - Methodological expertise in qualitative analysis

Note: The suggested lead institutions are indicative and reflect their general areas of responsibility rather than formal mandates.

Box 1.3. Developing island typologies

Several countries have developed systematic island typologies to improve policy targeting and strengthen the evidence base for island development. Typologies help policymakers differentiate between islands based on their size, accessibility, population, and economic profile, allowing for more tailored and comparable policy approaches.

- **Scotland:** The Scottish Government's islands typology groups islands according to population, accessibility, and ferry connections. Ten typology categories are used to support policy design and to inform *Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIAs)* introduced under the *Islands Act 2018*.
- **Croatia:** Under the *Islands Act 2018*, the Croatian Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds developed an *Island Development Index (IDI)* that classifies all inhabited islands based on economic, demographic, and spatial indicators. The index guides national investment priorities and helps monitor island development over time.
- **Finland:** The Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) introduced a classification of Finnish island areas that distinguishes between four types: inner archipelago, middle archipelago, outer archipelago, and archipelagic mainland areas. This typology supports environmental management, spatial planning, and analysis of human–nature interactions across the Finnish archipelago.

Developing a similar typology in Sweden would support the identification of island-specific challenges and assets, strengthen the evidence base for targeted interventions, and enable better alignment with international approaches.

Source: The analysis is based on insights from participants in the EC TAIEX-OECD Workshop (EC TAIEX-OECD Workshop, 2024^[6]).

1.3.3 Methodological and logistical challenges

Collecting reliable, comparable and policy-relevant data for islands is not only a question of indicator design but also of methodology and logistics. Implementation barriers must therefore be addressed through methodological innovation, stronger partnerships, and targeted resourcing. Even when the importance of island-level evidence is recognised, practical obstacles often limit what can be measured, how accurately, and at what level of detail. Overcoming these challenges is essential to build a robust evidence base for policymaking. Key issues include:

- **Small population size:** Many islands have very few permanent residents, which makes certain indicators statistically unreliable or unavailable. This is particularly evident for socio-economic data (e.g. labour market or income statistics), where sample sizes are often too small to produce meaningful results. One option is to use administrative registers and multi-year rolling averages to stabilise indicators, complemented by qualitative evidence.
- **Seasonality and population fluctuations:** Official statistics rarely capture the strong seasonal dynamics of island populations. Some islands are inhabited year-round, while many more have buildings and temporary residents for only part of the year. In some cases, a few hundred permanent residents become several thousand during summer months due to tourism, second-home ownership or seasonal work. Such fluctuations profoundly affect service demand, infrastructure needs and local economies, yet they remain largely invisible in standard datasets.

Combining tax-record, utility-consumption, and mobile-signal data can help estimate seasonal population peaks; these metrics should be incorporated into planning for transport and health services.

- **Accessibility constraints:** Indicators such as service access or travel times can only be calculated when data on ferry routes, road links or other transport connections are available. For more remote islands without such connections – or where schedules and capacities change seasonally – measuring accessibility becomes technically challenging. Establishing a national open database of ferry routes, capacities, and reliability indicators, maintained by the Swedish Transport Administration (*Trafikverket*), would enable regular and comparable accessibility modelling.
- **Definitional and typological ambiguities:** While Sweden has an established statistical definition of islands, there is no systematic typology based on size, connectivity, or seasonality. The absence of such classifications limits the ability to group islands meaningfully or tailor policies to their specific characteristics. Adopting a harmonised typology will enable cross-national comparison within OECD and EU frameworks and ensure that Swedish data feed into international benchmarking.

These methodological and logistical challenges underline the importance to complement traditional statistical approaches with innovative methods – such as integrating administrative data with geospatial analysis, mobility data or survey evidence – and to develop shared definitions and typologies that enable more consistent measurement and analysis. Sweden should embed these methodological advances within a formal *Island Data Protocol*, endorsed by Statistics Sweden (SCB) and by a proposed *National Island Coordination Unit (NICU)*. This protocol would define standards for data sharing, periodicity, and validation to ensure that island-specific evidence systematically informs *Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIA)* and broader policymaking.

1.4 Governance and policy integration for islands

Effective island policymaking depends on both strong institutional capacity and the systematic integration of island perspectives into policy design and implementation. Building the necessary skills, structures, and coordination mechanisms is essential to ensure that policies reflect island realities, address structural constraints, and make full use of local opportunities. This could be supported institutionally through the creation of a *National Island Coordination Unit (NICU)* within the Government Offices (*Regeringskansliet*), acting as a central policy integrator and supported by island focal points in key ministries (Transport, Digitalisation, Environment, Health, Education, and Finance). At the same time, embedding island considerations throughout the policymaking process helps prevent unintended negative impacts and ensures that public interventions deliver results on the ground.

1.4.1 Building capacity of island governance

Many island municipalities need support to strengthen administrative skills, improve coordination with other levels of government, and establish mechanisms for structured stakeholder engagement. Limited staff, technical skill gaps, and financial constraints often make it difficult to plan strategically, manage complex projects, or absorb national and EU funding. Coordination gaps between local, regional, and national authorities can weaken policy alignment and slow implementation, while insufficient dialogue with island communities risks overlooking valuable local knowledge. Addressing these institutional challenges is essential to ensure that island-specific policies achieve their intended outcomes. For example, Sweden could develop a multi-level governance platform convening the proposed *National Island Coordination Unit*

(NICU), Region Gotland, archipelago municipalities, Statistics Sweden (SCB), and relevant agencies twice annually to review implementation progress. It could also introduce a targeted Island Capacity Programme to fund secondments, training, and peer learning among municipalities with island responsibilities. Strengthening these institutional foundations is therefore essential to ensure that island-specific policies achieve their intended outcomes. Key actions include:

- **Build local capacity:** Strengthen the administrative capabilities of island municipalities through targeted training, technical support and peer learning between islands, enabling them to plan more strategically and manage complex policy processes (see Box 1.4 for example from Croatia).
- **Enhance coordination:** Improve cooperation across local, regional and national levels to ensure that island realities are reflected in broader policy frameworks. This includes the use of policy checklists to “island-proof” legislation and assess potential adverse impacts during the legislative process. Ministries could report annually on how island considerations have been integrated into sectoral strategies, and all completed ICIA summaries should be published through an open, publicly accessible portal.
- **Create dedicated structures:** Establish island focal points or specialised units within government institutions to improve policy coherence, mainstream island considerations across sectors, and coordinate implementation efforts (see Box 1.4 for example from Finland).
- **Engage stakeholders systematically:** Integrate local knowledge and needs into decision-making through structured engagement with residents, businesses, and civil society organisations, ensuring policies respond to on-the-ground realities.

Box 1.4. Strengthening island governance

Effective island governance depends on coordination mechanisms and dedicated institutional capacity. Several countries have introduced formal structures to improve cooperation across government levels and provide targeted support to island territories.

- **Croatia:** Under the *Islands Act 2018*, a network of 11 island coordinators was established to cover all coastal counties. The coordinators act as intermediaries between the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds and local authorities. They support island municipalities in identifying funding opportunities, preparing project proposals, and managing national and EU programmes. Beyond administrative support, they facilitate knowledge exchange across islands and ensure that local needs are reflected in regional and national policy frameworks.
- **Finland:** The *Advisory Committee for Island Affairs* serves as a permanent coordination body bringing together representatives from national, regional, and local governments. Supported by a technical secretariat, it reviews proposals on island development, conducts research on island-related challenges, and formulates recommendations to ensure that national policies reflect island conditions. By providing a structured forum for consultation, the committee strengthens policy coherence and ensures that island perspectives are systematically integrated into national decision-making.

Establishing similar coordination structures in Sweden could enhance multi-level governance, strengthen administrative capacity, and ensure that local island perspectives are systematically considered in policy design and implementation.

Source: The analysis is based on insights from participants in the EC TAIEX-OECD Workshop (EC TAIEX-OECD Workshop, 2024^[6]).

1.4.2 Embedding island perspectives into policy

Island proofing is a practical response to many of the policy blind spots identified in earlier sections. The approach builds on international practices such as those introduced through Scotland's *Islands Act 2018*, which established island proofing as a formal requirement in public policymaking (Scottish Government, 2019^[7]). It provides a structured process to ensure that the unique needs, vulnerabilities and opportunities of islands are systematically considered at every stage of the policy cycle – from agenda-setting and design to implementation and evaluation. Island proofing could be suggested for all legislative, regulatory, and funding proposals that may affect islands differently than the mainland, and embedded within Sweden's existing Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) process. Rather than a single instrument, it is an institutionalised *process* to policymaking that aims to prevent policies designed for urban or mainland contexts from generating unintended negative consequences for islands, while actively identifying opportunities to leverage their distinctive assets. When done effectively, island proofing helps translate improved evidence and stronger governance into concrete policy adjustments before decisions are finalised.

At its core, island proofing seeks to answer three key questions:

1. **What is being proofed:** which policies, strategies or legislative proposals are likely to affect islands?
2. **Who should be involved:** which levels of government, agencies, and stakeholders need to contribute?
3. **How should the proofing be conducted:** what methods, data, and forms of evidence are most effective?

Because policymaking often involves multiple institutions and levels of government, island proofing must be a collaborative effort. It requires cooperation between ministries, agencies, regional authorities, municipalities, and local communities. To operationalise this, each ministry should designate an *Island Proofer* responsible for screening proposals and liaising with the *National Island Coordination Unit (NICU)* – a new structure to be established – for quality assurance. It also depends on building a shared evidence base that combines quantitative data (e.g. demographic, economic or accessibility indicators) with qualitative insights (e.g. stakeholder perspectives, expert analysis, and local knowledge). A typical island proofing process can be broken down into two main stages:

- **Building the evidence base:** This involves identifying the policy areas most relevant for islands, gathering the necessary data, and engaging stakeholders and experts to provide context and qualitative insights.
- **Curating the outputs:** The evidence must then be translated into actionable policy inputs – such as reports, impact assessments or checklists – that can influence decision-making before policies are enacted.

The following seven-step *Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)* process operationalises the island-proofing approach: *Screening* – determine relevance; *Scoping* – define objectives; *Mapping* – identify responsibilities and coordination mechanisms; *Analysis* – gather and assess evidence; *Engagement* – consult stakeholders; *Adjustment* – assess impacts and propose solutions; *Monitoring* – track outcomes and feed back into future policy cycles. Each ICIA could reference the *Island Data Protocol* indicators and be publicly disclosed before Cabinet consideration. For example, a proposed change in national transport policy could be subject to island proofing by combining local data on ferry connections and mobility needs with stakeholder input from municipalities and regional transport authorities. The

resulting analysis would provide ministries with concrete evidence of how the proposal might affect island accessibility – allowing them to adjust the policy before implementation.

1.4.3 Checklist for island proofing

A structured checklist can serve as a practical entry point for policymakers and civil servants – particularly for those with limited experience in territorial or island-sensitive policymaking. Designed collaboratively with ministries, agencies, and local governments, the checklist should reflect real administrative processes and become an integral part of day-to-day decision-making.

To facilitate use, the checklist may be accompanied by short sector playbooks – two-page summaries for key domains such as transport, digital connectivity, housing, health, water, education, and environment – offering examples of how to apply island proofing in practice. Clear monitoring and evaluation arrangements should be established, specifying who monitors, which indicators are used, and at what intervals (e.g. one-year and three-year review cycles) to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

Once the checklist indicates that a proposal may have direct or indirect relevance for island communities, the responsible ministry or agency should proceed to conduct a **full Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)**, using the model provided in Annex A of this Toolkit. The ICIA template formalises the checklist results, providing a structured process for evidence gathering, stake

holder consultation, and impact analysis. It also ensures that findings are integrated into Sweden's national Regulatory Impact Assessment (*konsekvensutredning*) and consultation (*remiss*) processes, embedding island proofing within the national policymaking cycle.

Sweden's ICIA checklist may also be developed as a digital template, featuring dropdown menus for relevant sectors (e.g. transport, digital, water, housing, education, environment) to ensure consistent application and systematic data capture across institutions.

1. Screening: Determining the need for island proofing (*short-form ICIA*)

- *Identify whether the proposal is likely to affect islands directly or indirectly:*
 - ☐ **Yes:** Proceed with a *full ICIA*, following Steps 2-7 of the checklist.
 - ☐ **No:** Document the rationale and record that no further island proofing is required.
 - ☐ **Uncertain:** Conduct a short screening using the following quick checks (Table A.2).
 - Review whether any target groups, funding streams, or implementation areas include islands or island municipalities.
 - Check whether the proposal concerns sectors that are typically island-relevant (e.g. transport, digital connectivity, energy, environment, tourism, service delivery).
 - Consult with the national or regional island focal point, or at least one affected municipality, to verify potential impacts.
 - If any check shows relevance, proceed with a full island proofing assessment.

2. Define the scope and objectives

- *Clarify what is being assessed and what the island proofing aims to achieve:*
 - ☐ Identify the policy, programme, or legislative proposal being assessed.
 - ☐ Specify which islands or island groups are likely to be affected and how.

- ☐ Define the objectives of the proofing (e.g. improving inclusiveness, adjusting delivery mechanisms, preventing negative territorial impacts).
- ☐ Determine whether multiple sectors are involved and decide if a joint or sector-specific assessment is more appropriate.

3. Map responsibilities and actors

- *Identify who is responsible for conducting the proofing and how coordination will be ensured:*
 - ☐ Designate the lead unit or “island proofer” (i.e. the focal point responsible for coordinating the island proofing process) within the ministry or agency.
 - ☐ Identify key partners at regional and local levels (municipalities, regional authorities, agencies, or research institutions).
 - ☐ Define coordination mechanisms across levels of government (e.g. working groups, inter-ministerial committees, or consultation platforms).
 - ☐ Assign technical support roles or focal points where administrative capacity is limited.

4. Gather and analyse evidence

- *Collect and assess the data and information needed to evaluate potential impacts:*
 - ☐ Compile relevant quantitative data (e.g. demographics, connectivity, service access, seasonality, costs).
 - ☐ Collect complementary qualitative information from local stakeholders, experts, or previous consultations.
 - ☐ Review existing evaluations, case studies, or research addressing similar policy areas.
 - ☐ Identify data gaps and note how they will be filled (e.g. through administrative data, surveys, or geospatial analysis).
 - ☐ Document data sources and methodologies transparently.

Note: The baseline evidence pack (see Box 1.5) should be reusable across assessments and refreshed on a fixed cycle (e.g. annually), with only policy-specific supplements collected as needed.

5. Engage stakeholders

- *Ensure that island perspectives are represented and incorporated into the assessment:*
 - ☐ Identify which stakeholders should be consulted (e.g. local authorities, community groups, businesses, civil-society organisations).
 - ☐ Plan when and how engagement will occur (public meetings, targeted consultations, online feedback).
 - ☐ Ensure representation across different island types and locations.
 - ☐ Record stakeholder input and summarise how it informed the analysis and recommendations.

Note: The NICU could maintain a national register of island associations and experts for consultation purposes, ensuring diverse geographic coverage and gender balance.

6. Assess impacts and propose adjustments

- *Evaluate potential effects and identify ways to mitigate risks or enhance benefits:*
 - ☐ Evaluate likely positive and negative effects on island economies, communities, and environments.

- ☐ Compare impacts across different islands to capture variations by size, connectivity, or function.
- ☐ Propose mitigation measures for any adverse effects identified.
- ☐ Identify opportunities to enhance or scale up positive outcomes.
- ☐ Assess whether the policy contributes to long-term island resilience, sustainability, and policy coherence.

7. Monitoring, feedback and follow-up

- *Track implementation and ensure that lessons learned inform future policymaking:*
 - ☐ Define indicators and mechanisms to monitor policy outcomes for islands.
 - ☐ Assign responsibility and a timeline for follow-up reviews (e.g. one or two years post-implementation), including updates to the baseline evidence pack used for assessments.
 - ☐ Establish a feedback loop to integrate lessons learned into future policy cycles.
 - ☐ Align monitoring with broader territorial or rural impact assessments where relevant.
 - ☐ Document and communicate findings to ensure transparency, accountability, and reusability for future proofing exercises.

Note: To reinforce these functions at the national level, an Island Policy Forum (see Annex C) could be introduced as a standing body reviewing ICIA results, feeding into annual policy learning cycles, and aligning Swedish practice with OECD territorial-proofing principles.

Box 1.5. Reusing evidence so every assessment isn't a new data project

Island proofing should build on an existing baseline evidence pack – a reusable dataset and documentation repository that is periodically updated. Each new assessment only adds policy-specific supplements, saving time and resources while ensuring consistency. This approach should be applied to the extent that available data allow, recognising that gaps in island-level statistics may limit full comparability across assessments.

Baseline evidence pack

The baseline evidence pack brings together a core set of island proofing indicators (see Annex D) that remain relevant for most assessments – such as population and demographic trends, connectivity and accessibility, service access, economic structure, and environmental or energy indicators. It should be maintained by a designated data owner (for instance, a ministry, observatory, or statistical office) and refreshed on a regular cycle, typically once per year.

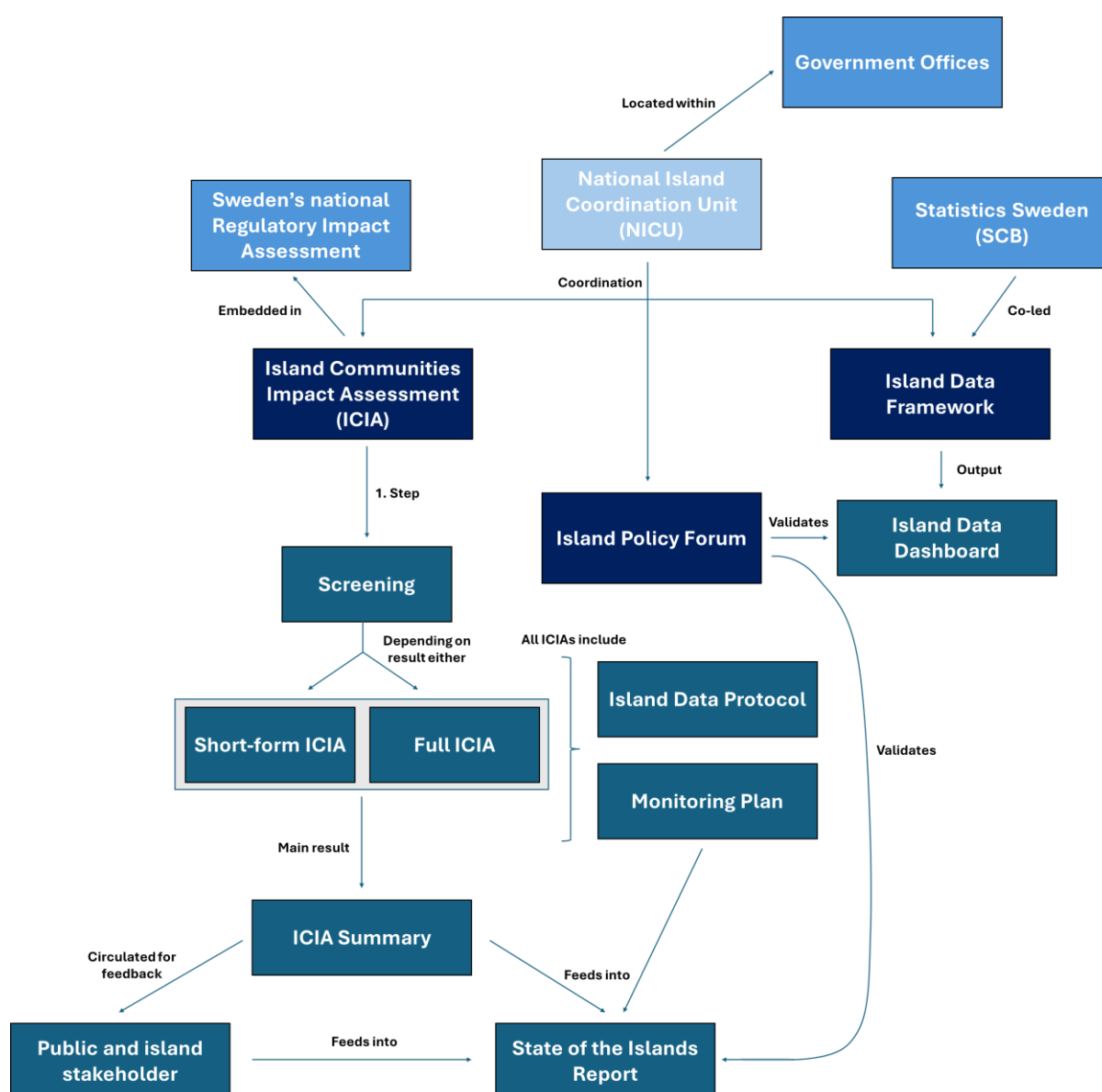
Policy-specific add-ons

For each new proofing exercise, only targeted evidence needs to be added – for example, transport data for mobility projects or tourism and seasonal data for visitor-related measures. This approach reduces duplication, keeps the analytical focus on interpreting results rather than collecting new data, and turns island proofing into a streamlined, evidence-based process rather than a recurring data-gathering task.

Island proofing is not an additional administrative layer, but a means of improving policy quality, ensuring that national measures respond effectively to the needs and opportunities of island communities. By systematically assessing how proposed policies may affect islands and adjusting them before adoption, governments can avoid unintended consequences, increase the impact of public investments, and unlock the development potential of island territories. Figure 1.4 provides an overview of the proposed institutions and mechanisms, which are described in greater detail in the following annex.

Figure 1.4. Overview of Institutions and Mechanisms

This diagram shows how the proposed institutions and mechanism may fit in the current Swedish institutional landscape



Note: All proposed institutions and mechanisms are described in more detail in the annex.

References

- Depraetere, C. and A. Dahl (2007), *Island Locations and Classifications*, [3]
<https://hal.science/hal-04442184/document>.
- EC TAIEX-OECD Workshop (2024), *EC TAIEX-OECD Workshop on data and island proofing, developed within the Project “Improving the quality of multi-level governance and strengthening the resilience of island economies of Croatia, Greece, and Sweden*, Stockholm, 14-15 November 2024. [6]
- ESPON (2019), *Bridges: Territories with geographical specificities*, [4]
<https://archive.espon.eu/geographical-specificities>.
- ESPON (2013), *The Development of Islands – European Islands and Cohesion Policy*, [2]
<https://archive.espon.eu/programme/projects/espon-2013/targeted-analyses/euroislands-development-islands-%E2%80%93-european-islands>.
- OECD (2025), *Reinforcing Rural Resilience*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [5]
<https://doi.org/10.1787/7cd485e3-en>.
- OECD (unpublished), *Internal document/report prepared for the OECD-EC Project “Improving the quality of multi-level governance and strengthening the resilience of island economies of Croatia, Greece, and Sweden*. [1]
- Scottish Government (2019), *National Islands Plan*, Scottish Government, Edinburgh, [7]
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-plan-scotlands-islands/>.

Annex A. Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) Template

This annex provides the updated model and guidance for conducting *Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIA)* within Sweden's policymaking framework. It aligns fully with the OECD-supported **Toolkit to strengthen island-specific policymaking in Sweden (2025)** and integrates the refinements identified through the Toolkit's analysis and pilot evaluations.

The ICIA could be embedded in Sweden's national Regulatory Impact Assessment (*konsekvensutredning*), ensuring that the distinct conditions of island communities are systematically considered throughout the entire policy cycle – from design to implementation and monitoring.

This revised template builds directly on the *Checklist for island proofing* presented in Section 1.4.3 of the Toolkit. The checklist serves as the first stage of the ICIA process – helping policymakers determine when a short-form or full ICIA assessment is required and ensuring that key island-relevant sectors (e.g. transport, digital connectivity, housing, environment) are systematically addressed before formal analysis.

Purpose and context

The ICIA is aimed to identify, assess, and address differential impacts of policies, programmes, and regulations on island communities relative to mainland areas. It provides an evidence-based framework that advances territorial cohesion, equity, and sustainable development. All ministries and agencies are supposed to apply an ICIA when proposed measures could influence accessibility, service provision, or quality of life in island territories. The process could be coordinated by a *National Island Coordination Unit (NICU)* within the Government Offices (*Regeringskansliet*).

ICIA principles and proportionality

The ICIA follows the principles of proportionality, transparency, and data integrity, ensuring that the level of analysis corresponds to the expected scale and significance of potential island impacts. In line with the principle of proportionality, the process distinguishes between a short-form ICIA and a full ICIA (see Table A.1), depending on the scope and expected magnitude of the policy's impact on island communities.

- A **short-form ICIA** (up to five pages) serves as the initial screening step to identify whether island impacts are likely. Conducted early in the policy design process, the short-form ICIA should be quick, high-level, and based on minimal or targeted consultation.
- A **full ICIA** is the comprehensive impact study that follows when the screening indicates potential relevance for island communities. Conducted once the short ICIA confirms relevance, it provides a detailed, evidence-based analysis of potential effects and mitigation measures. The resulting report is integrated into policy documentation to guide final adjustments and ensure transparency and accountability.

Table A.1. Short-form and full ICIA

Section	Subsection	Island Communities Impact Assessments (ICIA)	
1. Screening	Screening Checklist	Use the 7-question screening table (see Table A.2) covering the following policy areas: Transport and Mobility; Housing; Education and Health; Digital Connectivity; Energy and Environment; Economic Development, Governance and Participation	
	Initial Conclusion	- Tick: “Yes” (proceed to full ICIA); or “No” (continue with short-form ICIA); or if “uncertain” (seek clarification) - Provide short rationale (1–2 paragraphs)	
		☐ “No” <i>Finishing the <u>short-form ICIA</u></i>	☐ “Yes” <i>Continuing further to the <u>full ICIA</u></i>
2. Scoping	Basic Information	- Policy / programme / regulation name - Date of screening	- Policy / programme / regulation name - Date of screening - Timeline and status of the proposal
	Purpose of Assessment	- Broad description of proposal - What does it seek to change or achieve?	- Full description of objectives, rationale, and expected outcomes - How does the proposal align with island development priorities or the national island strategy?
3. Mapping	Responsible institutions	- Lead ministry or agency - Contact person / “island proofer”	- Lead ministry or agency - Contact person(s) and team / “island proofer” - Link to Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) or remiss procedure
4. Analysis	Evidence and Data	Note if any existing evidence suggests impacts on islands (e.g. ferry access, service delivery, housing costs)	- Detailed evidence base: quantitative (demographics, costs, service access, etc.) and qualitative (stakeholder inputs, case studies) - Data sources documented and gaps identified - Reference baseline evidence pack
5. Engagement	Stakeholder Engagement	Indicate whether local authorities or island municipalities were consulted (Yes/No)	- List consulted stakeholders (municipalities, associations, NGOs, businesses) - Methods used (surveys, meetings, online consultation) - Summary of feedback and how it influenced analysis
6. Adjustment	Assessment of Impacts	Short note on possible direct or indirect impacts (economic, social, environmental)	Detailed assessment comparing impacts across different islands by category: - Economic (employment, tourism, costs) - Social (population, access to services) - Environmental (energy, ecosystems) - Governance (participation, delivery capacity)
	Mitigation and Enhancement Measures	<i>(Optional if relevance is uncertain)</i>	- Concrete adjustments proposed to improve delivery or reduce harm (e.g. targeted funding, flexible implementation, exemptions) - Opportunities to strengthen island resilience and sustainability
7. Monitoring	Monitoring and Follow-up	Not required, but may note if further observation is planned	- Define indicators, responsible institutions, and review intervals (e.g. 1-year and 3-year reviews) - Plan for feedback loops and updates to the evidence base
	Summary and Next Steps	- Decision outcome (Full ICIA required / Not required) - Signature of responsible officer	- Key findings and recommendations - Agreed policy adjustments - Monitoring commitments - Signature and approval by ministry leadership

Minor administrative or internal procedural changes may be exempt but must still complete the Screening Checklist (see Table A.2) and record the exemption rationale.

Table A.2. Screening Checklist

Policy area	Screening question	Yes / No
<i>Transport and Mobility</i>	Does the proposal affect ferry services, accessibility, or travel costs for islands?	
<i>Housing and Land Use</i>	Could the policy influence housing supply, land use, or property costs in islands?	
<i>Education and Health</i>	Does the measure impact access to education, healthcare, or social services?	
<i>Digital Connectivity</i>	Will it alter broadband or mobile connectivity in island areas?	
<i>Energy and Environment</i>	Does it affect energy infrastructure, renewable generation, or environmental resilience?	
<i>Economic Development</i>	Could it change local employment, tourism, or business conditions?	
<i>Governance and Participation</i>	Will it modify opportunities for island residents to engage in policy processes?	

Once the ICIA is completed, the responsible ministry or agency should summarise findings using the ICIA Summary Template (Table A.3). Completed summaries should be submitted to *National Island Coordination Unit (NICU)* and published in both the consultation (*remiss*) documentation and the ICIA Portal.

Table A.3. ICIA Summary Template

Field	Entry
<i>Policy or programme name</i>	
<i>Responsible ministry/agency</i>	
<i>Policy objective</i>	
<i>Affected islands (linked / ferry-dependent / isolated)</i>	
<i>Key data sources used (incl. (Island Data Protocol references)</i>	
<i>Stakeholder consultations conducted</i>	
<i>Identified impacts (positive/negative, seasonal effects noted)</i>	
<i>Mitigation or adjustment measures (avoid–minimise–compensate)</i>	
<i>Decision Summary</i>	
<i>Follow-up review schedule (1-year, 3-year)</i>	
<i>Publication (ICIA Portal / datasets)</i>	

Table A.1 presents an example of a completed ICIA based on a case of a ferry subsidy reform, illustrating how the checklist can be applied in practice to identify sectoral impacts and propose targeted adjustments. The corresponding Summary Template is provided in Table A.4, which compiles the key findings, recommended measures, and follow-up actions from the assessment.

Table A.4. ICIA Summary Template – Example: Transport Accessibility

Field	Entry
<i>Policy or programme name</i>	Subsidy Reform for Island Ferry Services.
<i>Responsible ministry/agency</i>	Ministry of Infrastructure (<i>Infrastrukturdepartementet</i>).
<i>Policy objective</i>	Improve cost-efficiency while maintaining accessibility for residents and businesses.
<i>Affected islands</i>	Gotland, Öckerö, Tjörn, Orust, and small archipelago communities in Västra Götaland.
<i>Key data sources used</i>	<i>Trafikverket</i> data on ferry frequency and punctuality; SCB demographic data and seasonal population estimates from mobile-signal proxies.
<i>Stakeholder consultations conducted</i>	<i>Länsstyrelserna</i> , Region Gotland, SKR, island municipalities, transport operators, and civil society representatives.
<i>Identified Impacts</i>	Potential risk of reduced frequency for low-traffic routes; positive environmental impact from electrified ferries.
<i>Mitigation measures</i>	Introduce adaptive subsidy model based on passenger volume; support electric ferry investments.
<i>Decision summary</i>	Proceed with reform including mitigation; implement pilot in 2026.
<i>Follow-up review schedule</i>	Review in 2027 (1-year) and 2029 (3-year).
<i>Publication</i>	Summary published in consultation (<i>remiss</i>) documentation and on ICIA Portal prior to Cabinet decision.

Integration in the policy cycle

The ICIA should be initiated as part of the national Regulatory Impact Assessment (*konsekvensutredning*) and inform subsequent steps as follows:

- **Consultation (*Remiss*):** ICIA Summary circulated for public and island stakeholder feedback.
- **Agency instructions (*Regleringsbrev*):** Implementation and data reporting responsibilities reflected in annual instructions.
- **NICU oversight:** NICU coordinates methodology, maintains ICIA Portal, and supports cross-ministerial learning.
- **Pre-decision disclosure:** ICIA summaries published prior to Cabinet review unless security-sensitive.

Monitoring and reporting

Each ICIA should include a *monitoring plan*, with results reviewed after one and three years and compiled by NICU in an annual *State of the Islands Report*. Key KPIs should include connectivity reliability, travel time to services, renewable energy share, seasonal population ratio, and resident satisfaction with services. A proposed set of indicators, including definitions and data sources, is presented in Annex D (*Indicators for Island Proofing*).

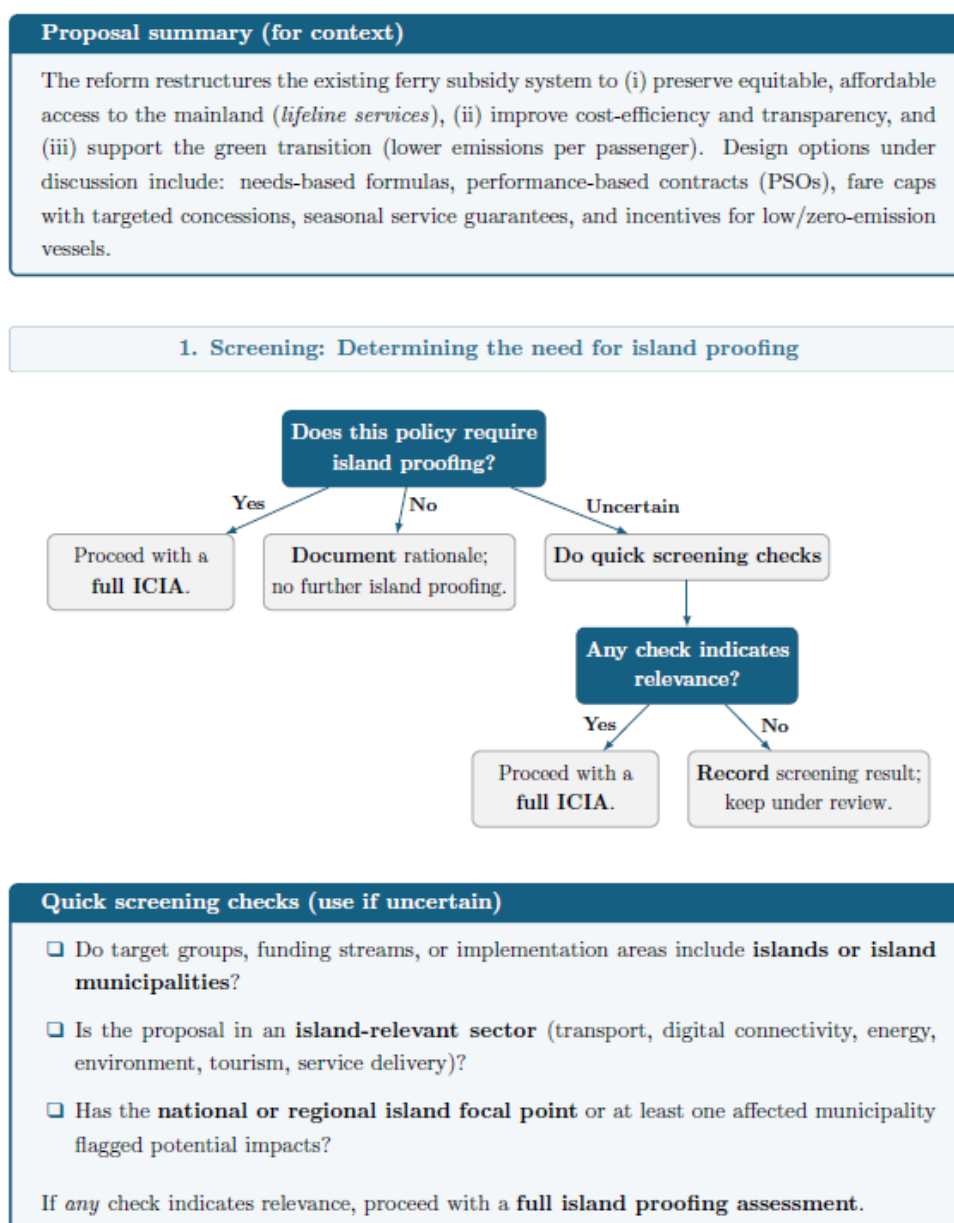
Figure A.1. Applying the ICIA checklist

Illustrative ICIA example applied to a ferry subsidy reform

Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)

Proposal: Ferry Subsidy Reform (Sweden)

Filled example for discussion and training purposes



2. Define the scope and objectives

What is being assessed? A restructuring of national ferry subsidies for lifeline services connecting inhabited islands to the mainland and inter-island routes.

Affected areas:

- **Large/single-island hub:** Gotland (year-round passenger/vehicle ferry, tourism-heavy seasonality).
- **Multi-island archipelagos:** Öckerö, Orust/Tjörn, Stockholm/Kalmar archipelagos (shorter routes, higher frequency, school/work commutes).
- **Remote/sparsely populated isla:** Northern archipelagos (e.g. Norrbotten) with low volumes but high dependence.

Objectives of island proofing (aligned with the reform):

- Maintain **affordable access** (*lifeline principle*) for residents and essential services.
- Improve **service reliability and coverage** (frequency, first/last sailings aligned with work/school/health needs).
- Enhance **cost-efficiency and transparency** of subsidies (clear formulas, PSO performance metrics).
- Support **environmental sustainability** (emissions-intensity targets, vessel replacements).
- Avoid uneven territorial impacts across island types (size, remoteness, connectivity).

Multi-sector consideration: Primarily transport, with links to environment, regional development, education/health access. A joint assessment led by the transport authority with inputs from environment and regional policy is appropriate.

3. Map responsibilities and actors

Lead island proofer: Ministry of Rural Affairs and Infrastructure (Policy), with Trafikverket (Delivery & Contracts).

Key partners:

- **National:** Transportstyrelsen (regulator/safety), Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.
- **Regional/Local:** County administrative boards, regions (e.g. Västra Götaland, Stockholm, Kalmar), municipalities (e.g. Öckerö, Orust, Region Gotland).
- **Operators:** Public and contracted ferry operators (including PSO contractors).
- **Stakeholders:** Island residents' associations, SMEs, tourism boards, fishing and logistics representatives, schools/health providers.
- **Research:** Universities/research institutes with maritime and regional expertise.

Coordination mechanisms:

- Inter-ministerial working group (transport, environment, regional development, finance).
- NICU-facilitated Island Policy Forum (biannual) for structured consultation and peer review of ICIA findings.
- Contracting task force for PSO/performance metrics and procurement.

Technical support: Dedicated analytics team (demand modelling, geospatial accessibility, emissions LCA, cost benchmarking), plus municipal focal points where capacity is limited.

4. Gather and analyse evidence
Quantitative baseline:

- Demographics (population, age structure, seasonal variation).
- Connectivity metrics: sailings/day, first/last sailing times, cancellation rates, on-time performance.
- Affordability: single fare and monthly pass; fare as % of disposable income for typical commuter/student/older adult.
- Travel times to essential services (school, hospital with A&E, mainland employment centres).
- Demand: passenger- and vehicle-km by month; peak/off-peak load factors.
- Costs & subsidies: operating cost per trip/per km, subsidy per passenger-km/vehicle-km, revenue coverage ratio.
- Environmental: fuel type, energy use per trip, CO₂ emissions per passenger-km/vehicle-km.

Qualitative inputs:

- Focus groups/interviews with residents, SMEs, operators, schools/health providers (commute reliability, affordability pain points, seasonality).
- Prior evaluations/case studies (e.g. service cuts/expansions, electrification pilots).

Data gaps & how to fill:

- Missing disaggregated income data for affordability – approximate using tax records and national surveys; validate with municipal data.
- Limited real-time reliability data – require operator reporting via digital logbooks and independent spot checks.
- Emissions factors – use operator fuel/energy logs and harmonised Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) factors; cross-check with Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) data.

Baseline evidence pack (reusable)

Maintain a national baseline pack (updated annually) with standard indicators, GIS layers, and operator datasets; attach policy-specific supplements (routes affected, vessel types, proposed contract terms) for each assessment.

5. Engage stakeholders

Who to consult:

- Island municipalities and residents' associations (e.g. Öckerö, Orust, Region Gotland).
- County/regional transport authorities and planning boards.
- Ferry operators/contractors; unions/crew representatives.
- Business and tourism associations; logistics/freight forwarders; fishing cooperatives.
- Education and health providers (school timetables, patient transport).

When/how to engage:

- Early scoping calls; two rounds of *targeted consultations* (pre-design; post-draft design).
- *Public meetings* on islands (north/central/south clusters to capture diversity).
- *Online feedback* hub with route-specific summaries and survey (Swedish/English).

Representation: Ensure coverage across large/small, near/remote islands, with gender balance and youth/older-adult voices.

Recording & use of input: Publish a short consultation report summarising points that *changed* the design (e.g. school-aligned first sailings; monthly pass caps; medical travel concessions).

6. Assess impacts and propose adjustments

Likely effects:

- **Positive:** Greater fare predictability (caps), better alignment with school/shift work, reliability incentives, lower emissions per trip where electrification/hybridisation is feasible.
- **Risks:** Uniform efficiency targets could pressure thin routes; seasonal crowding if fares drop without capacity planning; potential fare drift on non-capped products.

Variations across islands:

- *Gotland:* Long routes; high tourism seasonality; large vessels – focus on seasonal capacity management and dynamic Public Service Obligation (PSO) KPIs.
- *Archipelagos (Öckerö/Orust/Tjörn/Stockholm/Kalmar):* Short, frequent routes; school/work criticality – prioritise first/last sailing guarantees and punctuality metrics.
- *Remote north (Norrbotten):* Low volumes; high dependence – apply needs-based subsidy floor and reliability safeguards.

Mitigation/enhancement measures:

- **Affordability:** Lifeline fare caps; $\leq X\%$ of median disposable income for standard commute baskets; free/discounted travel for students/medical trips.

- **Service access:** Minimum service standards by route category (first/last sailings, school-day guarantees, maximum headways).
- **Resilience:** Weather disruption protocols; redundancy arrangements; contingency vessels.
- **Efficiency & transparency:** Publish route-level subsidy per passenger/vehicle-km and KPI dashboards.
- **Green transition:** PSO scoring bonus for low/zero-emission vessels; retrofit funds; shore-power readiness.

Long-term contribution: The package supports island resilience by safeguarding lifeline access, stabilising household budgets, enabling work/education participation, and reducing per-km emissions.

7. Monitoring, feedback and follow-up

Core indicators (accessibility & affordability focus):

- **Affordability:** Single/return fares and monthly pass prices; fare basket as % of disposable income (commuter, student, older adult).
- **Accessibility:** Sailings/day; first/last sailing times vs. school/shift schedules; maximum headway; share of population within time thresholds to essential services.
- **Reliability:** On-time performance; cancellation rate; disruption recovery time.
- **Demand & usage:** Passenger- and vehicle-km; load factors (peak/off-peak); seasonal indices.
- **Economic/social (secondary):** Tourism nights; SME deliveries on-time; student no-show rates due to transport; patient travel completion rates.
- **Environment:** Energy use per trip; CO₂ emissions per passenger/vehicle-km; share of low/zero-emission sailings.

Responsibilities & timing:

- **Data collection:** Operators (contractual duty) → Trafikverket (validation) → NICU dashboard (publication).
- **Review points:** 12 months (implementation review) and 24 months (impact evaluation) post-reform; update the baseline evidence pack accordingly.
- **Feedback loop:** Island Policy Forum to review KPI trends and recommend adjustments to PSO terms/fare caps/service standards.

Alignment: Monitoring aligns with broader territorial/rural impact frameworks; ICIA results feed into annual policy learning cycles.

Note: This filled example is designed to stimulate discussion among participants. Replace illustrative names with the authoritative Swedish entities and legal references as needed.

Annex B. Island Data Framework

This annex provides the structure and operational guidance for the *Island Data Framework*, which underpins evidence-based policymaking within Sweden's national approach to island proofing. It complements Annex D on the indicators of island proofing and forms part of the OECD-supported **Toolkit to strengthen island-specific policymaking in Sweden (2025)**.

Purpose and context

The *Island Data Framework* can establish a coherent system for collecting, integrating, and sharing data relevant to Sweden's islands. It ensures that policymaking across ministries, agencies, and regional authorities is based on reliable, comparable evidence. The framework could be co-led by the *National Island Coordination Unit (NICU)* within the Government Offices (*Regeringskansliet*) and Statistics Sweden (SCB), in partnership with other institutions.

Objectives and governance principles

The framework's objectives are to:

- Provide consistent, high-quality data for use in ICIAs.
- Support the monitoring of accessibility, service equity, and sustainability in island communities.
- Enable open access to aggregated island-level data, consistent with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and SCB metadata standards.
- Strengthen coordination among national agencies, County Administrative Boards (*Länsstyrelserna*), regions, and municipalities (see Table B.1).

Table B.1. Governance structure

Institution	Outputs	Coordination Mechanism
<i>NICU</i>	<i>Annual State of the Islands Report.</i>	Inter-Ministerial Data Committee.
<i>SCB (Statistiska centralbyrån)</i>	Island Data Dashboard, open data APIs.	Formal cooperation with NICU.
<i>Tillväxtverket</i>	Island SME datasets and reports.	Data-sharing agreements with SCB.
<i>Länsstyrelserna</i>	Regional island datasets.	Coordination via NICU regional network.
<i>Regions</i>	Regional indicators and analyses.	Regional data coordination forums.
<i>SKR (Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner)</i>	Training and guidance materials.	Annual SKR–NICU data workshops.

Note: For institutional roles, see Annex C.

Data domains and indicators

The framework is structured into five main domains. Each domain includes example indicators that can be expanded as data availability improves (see Table B.2).

Table B.2. Data domains

Domain	Example Indicators	Objective	Responsible Institutions
<i>Connectivity</i>	Ferry reliability, travel time to mainland, broadband access, mobile coverage.	Ensure reliable, affordable, and sustainable access between islands and the mainland.	<i>Trafikverket, Transportstyrelsen, PTS, SCB</i>
<i>Services and Infrastructure</i>	Access to healthcare, education, and utilities; energy resilience.	Promote equitable access to essential services and resilient infrastructure.	<i>Socialstyrelsen, Skolverket, Energimyndigheten, Regions</i>
<i>Demography and Economy</i>	Population trends, employment, business dynamics, seasonal residents.	Enhance local economic vitality and demographic stability.	<i>SCB, Tillväxtverket, Länsstyrelserna</i>
<i>Environment and Climate</i>	Flood exposure, waste recycling rate, water stress index, renewable energy use.	Safeguard island ecosystems and strengthen climate adaptation capacity.	<i>SMHI, SGU, Naturvårdsverket, Länsstyrelserna</i>
<i>Governance and Participation</i>	Existence of island strategies, consultation (<i>remiss</i>) participation rates, local cooperation networks.	Foster inclusive governance and multi-level cooperation.	<i>NICU, SKR, Regions, Municipalities</i>

Data sources and collection mechanisms

Data are drawn from existing national databases and administrative systems, supplemented by regional and municipal inputs. The table below summarises principal data sources, collection frequency, and data owners (see Table B.3).

Table B.3. Data sources

Data Source	Type of Data	Frequency	Primary Data Owner
<i>SCB Statistics Databases</i>	Demographic, labour market, and economic data at island and municipal levels.	Annual	SCB
<i>Trafikverket Ferry Statistics</i>	Passenger numbers, reliability, emissions, and route data.	Quarterly	<i>Trafikverket</i>
<i>PTS Broadband Mapping</i>	Coverage, speed, and reliability of broadband services.	Annual	<i>PTS</i>
<i>SMHI Climate Data</i>	Precipitation, temperature, flood risk, and sea-level rise.	Continuous	<i>SMHI</i>
<i>Tillväxtverket Enterprise Data</i>	SME performance and innovation indicators.	Annual	<i>Tillväxtverket</i>
<i>Municipal Registers</i>	Local service availability, housing, and infrastructure.	Annual	Municipalities/ <i>SKR</i>

Island data dashboard design

The *Island Data Dashboard* can provide a visual and interactive interface for exploring key indicators. It allows comparison between islands, regions, and national averages, and links directly to ICIA evidence requirements.

Main features include:

- Interactive maps displaying accessibility, connectivity, and service indicators.
- Downloadable indicator datasets with SCB metadata.
- Filters by island type (linked, ferry-dependent, isolated).
- Integration with the State of the Islands annual reporting portal.

- Built using open-source visualisation software, ensuring interoperability with other government dashboards.

Data quality, sharing, and open access protocols

All data collected under the *Island Data Framework* follow national quality standards and metadata conventions. Key principles include:

- Compliance with GDPR and protection of personal data.
- Use of SCB's open data API standards for automated sharing.
- Periodic verification of data accuracy and consistency.
- Publication of aggregated island data through a central government portal.
- Shared data responsibility between national and regional authorities under NICU oversight.

Future development and review

The *Island Data Framework* will evolve alongside policy needs and data innovations. A structured review process ensures continuous improvement between 2025 and 2030 (see Table B.4).

Table B.4. Structure review process

Period	Key Actions	Expected Outputs
2025–2026	Establish data governance protocols and dashboard prototype; pilot data collection with Regions Gotland and Västra Götaland.	Operational dashboard prototype; harmonised metadata standards.
2027–2028	Expand coverage to all inhabited islands; integrate new domains such as health and education access.	Comprehensive island database with multi-sectoral coverage.
2029–2030	Conduct external review of data framework performance; align with OECD and EU statistical frameworks.	Revised <i>Island Data Framework</i> 2.0; integration with national statistics systems.

Annex C. Governance and Coordination Mechanisms

This annex outlines the institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms that enable effective island proofing within Sweden's multilevel governance system. It complements the OECD-supported **Toolkit to strengthen island-specific policymaking in Sweden (2025)**, as well as Annex A and Annex B, which address impact assessment and data frameworks, and Annex D (*Indicators for Island Proofing*) and Annex E (*Implementation Roadmap*). Effective governance ensures that island-specific considerations are systematically integrated into the national policy cycle.

Purpose and context

Sweden's governance model is highly decentralised, involving strong cooperation between the national government (*Regeringskansliet*), County Administrative Boards (*Länsstyrelserna*), regions (*regioner*), and municipalities (*kommuner*). Island proofing requires coordination across these levels to ensure that national policies are adapted to island realities, while regional and municipal actions align with overarching national objectives for territorial cohesion and sustainability (see Table C.1).

Table C.1. Institutional roles and responsibilities

Institution / Actor	Key Responsibilities	Outputs	Coordination Mechanism
NICU	Strategic oversight of island proofing; methodology development; coordination of ICIA and data frameworks.	Guidelines, ICIA repository, annual <i>State of the Islands Report</i> .	Inter-ministerial working group and <i>Island Policy Forum</i> .
Line Ministries (departement)	Implement ICIA in sectoral policies; report on island impacts and mitigation.	Sectoral ICIA reports; inclusion in regulatory proposals.	Coordination via NICU and interdepartmental committees.
County Administrative Boards (Länsstyrelserna)	Adapt and coordinate national policies regionally; provide island data; support municipalities.	Regional implementation reports; data inputs to NICU.	Regional coordination platforms and data sharing agreements.
Regions (regioner)	Integrate island dimensions in regional development and transport plans.	Regional island strategies and monitoring frameworks.	Collaboration with <i>Länsstyrelserna</i> and SKR.
Municipalities (kommuner)	Implement and adapt local services and infrastructure; engage residents.	Local island plans; community feedback.	Consultation (<i>remiss</i>) and regular dialogue with regions and SKR.
SKR (Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner)	Capacity building, knowledge sharing, and policy advocacy for local governments.	Guidance materials, workshops, peer-learning sessions.	Annual SKR–NICU coordination meetings.

Note: For detailed data responsibilities, see Annex B.

Objectives of coordination

The key objectives of the governance and coordination system for island proofing are to:

- Ensure coherent policy development between national, regional, and local actors.

- Mainstream island perspectives in all relevant sectoral strategies and budgets.
- Enable effective data exchange, impact assessments, and policy learning.
- Strengthen participatory governance by involving island stakeholders early in decision-making.

Coordination mechanisms and instruments

Several established Swedish administrative instruments support coordination of island proofing across levels of government:

- **Government Decisions (*Regeringsbeslut*):** Used to formalise national commitments and allocate funding for island-related initiatives.
- **Agency Instructions (*Regleringsbrev*):** Define annual priorities for government agencies, incorporating island proofing and ICIA requirements.
- **Consultation Process (*Remiss*):** Island municipalities and regional stakeholders can review and provide input on national proposals.
- **Dialogue Meetings (*Dialogmöten*):** Cross-level meetings between NICU, *Länsstyrelserna*, regions, and SKR to exchange experiences and align priorities.

Policy coordination flow

The policy coordination flow below illustrates how island proofing principles could be embedded throughout Sweden's policy process:

1. **Policy Design:** Ministry prepares draft regulation or programme and screens for island relevance.
2. **ICIA and data inputs:** Ministry conducts ICIA using the methodology in Annex A, supported by the *Island Data Framework* (Annex B).
3. **Consultation (*Remiss*):** ICIA findings shared with *Länsstyrelserna*, regions, municipalities, and SKR.
4. **NICU review:** NICU assesses compliance and ensures alignment with national island policy goals.
5. **Decision (*Regeringsbeslut*):** Final policy adopted with documented island adjustments.
6. **Implementation (*Regleringsbrev*):** Agencies integrate island-proofing obligations into operations.
7. **Monitoring and feedback:** Reporting through the annual *State of the Islands Report* and ICIA reviews.

NICU and the Island Policy Forum

The proposed *National Island Coordination Unit (NICU)* within the Government Offices (*Regeringskansliet*) would act as the central coordination body. It could facilitate an annual *Island Policy Forum*, which brings together ministries, agencies, regions, municipalities, academia, and civil society to review progress and share practices.

The Forum aims to:

- Review national ICIA results and island data indicators.
- Identify systemic barriers to effective island proofing.
- Share innovations and pilot project outcomes.
- Provide recommendations for the following year's regulatory and budgetary cycle.

Pilot and capacity-building initiatives

Pilot initiatives serve as learning laboratories for testing island proofing approaches and strengthening institutional capacity.

- **Region Gotland:** Focuses on applying the ICIA in transport and energy planning; tests integration of the *Island Data Dashboard*.
- **Öckerö Municipality:** Pilots digital consultation mechanisms and participatory local impact assessments.
- **Länsstyrelsen in Kalmar:** Coordinates inter-island cooperation and regional adaptation planning.

NICU, in collaboration with *SKR* and *Tillväxtverket*, would provide training modules and guidance documents for officials involved in island-proof policymaking.

Reporting and feedback

Island proofing requires continuous monitoring and transparent reporting. An annual *State of the Islands Report* would consolidate data and insights from ICIA submissions, regional inputs, and stakeholder consultations. It would inform government decisions on funding allocations and programme adjustments.

This report could be structured around the five domains of the *Island Data Framework* (Annex B) and would provide updates on the *Implementation Roadmap* (Annex E). All findings should be shared through the government's open data portal to ensure accessibility and accountability.

Annex D. Indicators for Island Proofing

This annex defines the monitoring framework that supports the implementation and evaluation of island proofing in Sweden. It complements the OECD-supported **Toolkit to strengthen island-specific policymaking in Sweden (2025)** and builds upon the *Island Communities Impact Assessment* (Annex A) and the *Island Data Framework* (Annex B). The indicators presented here enable systematic measurement of policy outcomes and support data-driven decision-making.

Objectives and principles

The *Indicator Framework* aims to provide consistent, high-quality measures to monitor accessibility, service provision, and sustainability across Sweden's islands. It ensures that policy impacts can be tracked over time and across governance levels.

The indicators are developed according to the following principles:

- Alignment with Statistics Sweden (SCB) data standards.
- Compatibility with OECD and EU Territorial Indicators frameworks.
- Focus on outcomes rather than only inputs or activities.
- Feasibility, comparability, and clarity for both national and regional users.
- Support for the evaluation of the ICIA and related programmes.

Table D.1 below presents an illustrative subset, structured by key dimensions of island development and resilience, that aligns with the ICIA monitoring framework.

Table D.1. Key Performance Indicators for Island Development Monitoring

Illustrative framework of key indicators to monitor island development, resilience, and policy performance

Dimension	Indicator	Definition	Policy relevance
<i>Strategic planning and initiatives</i>	Existence of local island strategy	Share of island municipalities or island groups with a formal strategy addressing island-specific priorities (e.g. connectivity, services, energy).	Reflects local institutional capacity and strategic planning for insular development.
	Alignment with regional and national plans	Share of island strategies referencing regional or national development frameworks	Measures policy coherence and integration across governance levels.
<i>Competitive landscape</i>	Business creation rate	Number of new firms registered per 1 000 working-age inhabitants on islands.	Indicates entrepreneurial dynamism and local economic vitality.
	Employment by sector	Employment share by main sectors (agriculture, manufacturing, services, tourism).	Tracks structural shifts and diversification in island economies.
	Innovation activity	Share of firms engaged in R&D or innovation, participation in EU or national innovation programmes.	Captures potential for knowledge-based and green growth.
<i>Infrastructure and land use</i>	Connectivity index	Composite measure of ferry frequency, reliability, and travel time to mainland or regional centres.	Evaluates accessibility and transport resilience critical for mobility and service delivery.
	Access to essential services	Average travel time to nearest hospital or upper secondary school, by mode.	Captures equality in access to healthcare and education for island residents.

<i>Sustainability and quality of place</i>	Broadband coverage	Share of households or businesses with access to high-speed broadband (≥ 100 Mbps).	Reflects digital inclusion and access to online services.
	Land-use intensity	Share of developed land area relative to total island area (built-up ratio).	Monitors spatial pressures, infrastructure footprint, and environmental sustainability.
	Renewable-energy share	Share of electricity generated from renewable sources in total local energy mix.	Tracks transition to clean energy and energy self-sufficiency.
	Waste-recycling rate	Share of municipal waste recycled or composted.	Assesses circular economy progress and waste management efficiency.
	Seasonal population ratio	Ratio of peak seasonal to permanent population.	Highlights seasonal fluctuations in service demand and infrastructure stress.
	Perceived quality of life	Share of residents reporting satisfaction with living conditions, services, and environment.	Reflects social well-being and attractiveness of island life.

Note: The table presents a pilot set of indicators designed to support the development of a national *Island Data Framework*. They can be refined through consultation with national and regional stakeholders to ensure data availability, comparability, and long-term reporting consistency.

Reporting cycle and governance

Indicators are reported through the *Island Data Dashboard* managed by SCB and NICU. Each responsible body updates its data according to the reporting frequency listed above. NICU consolidates this information into the annual *State of the Islands Report* validated through the *Island Policy Forum* (Annex C).

The reporting cycle follows these stages:

8. Data collection and validation by the responsible agency.
9. Data upload to the *Island Data Dashboard* (Annex B).
10. Review by NICU and cross-check with ICIA results.
11. Publication of national and regional summaries.
12. Discussion in the *Island Policy Forum* and feedback to ministries.

Use of indicators in policy

The indicator framework supports decision-making and evaluation at multiple levels:

- **National level:** NICU and line ministries use indicators to assess compliance with territorial cohesion objectives.
- **Regional level:** *Länsstyrelserna* and regions use data to monitor policy implementation and identify disparities.
- **Local level:** Municipalities and *SKR* use indicators to plan services, engage residents, and evaluate progress.
- **International level:** The indicators ensure comparability with OECD and EU databases for island territories.

Future development and review

To ensure relevance and quality, the indicator framework will be periodically reviewed and updated. Planned development steps for the period 2025–2030 are outlined in Table B.

Annex E. Implementation Roadmap (2025-2030)

This annex presents the implementation roadmap for Sweden's island proofing framework for the period 2025–2030. It outlines the phased actions required to embed island-specific policymaking within Sweden's multilevel governance system. The roadmap complements the OECD-supported **Toolkit to strengthen island-specific policymaking in Sweden (2025)** and the accompanying annexes (A, B, C, D).

Objectives and approach

The implementation roadmap aims to translate the principles and structures defined in the Toolkit into coordinated actions across all governance levels. Its objectives are to:

- Ensure that all ministries, agencies, and subnational authorities systematically apply island proofing in policy design and implementation.
- Strengthen institutional capacity for data collection, ICIA application, and evaluation.
- Create mechanisms for learning, accountability, and continuous improvement.

The roadmap can be implemented under the coordination of the *National Island Coordination Unit (NICU)* within the Government Offices (*Regeringskansliet*).

Implementation plan (2025–2030)

The roadmap is structured into three phases covering the period 2025–2030 (see Table E.1). Each phase includes key actions, responsible institutions, and expected outputs.

Table E.1. Implementation roadmap

Phase / Period	Focus Areas	Key Actions	Lead / Partners	Expected Outputs
<i>Phase I:</i> 2025–2026	Institutional Setup and Piloting	• Establish NICU operational procedures and inter-ministerial coordination. • Pilot ICIA in 3 sectors (transport, energy, digital connectivity). • Develop and test the Island Data Dashboard prototype. • Launch annual <i>Island Policy Forum</i>.	NICU, SCB, <i>Trafikverket</i> , <i>Energimyndigheten</i> , <i>Tillväxtverket</i> , Region Gotland, Öckerö Municipality.	NICU established; pilot CIAs completed; functional data dashboard prototype.
<i>Phase II:</i> 2027–2028	Mainstreaming and Capacity Building	• Extend ICIA and <i>Island Data Framework</i> to all relevant ministries and agencies. • Conduct training programmes for <i>Länsstyrelserna</i> and municipalities. • Integrate island proofing requirements into <i>regleringsbrev</i> and regional planning processes. • Strengthen data interoperability across agencies.	NICU, SKR, <i>Länsstyrelserna</i> , Regions, SCB, Sectoral Ministries.	Island proofing mainstreamed across policy sectors; capacity building completed; interoperable data systems.
<i>Phase III:</i> 2029–2030	Evaluation and Continuous Improvement	• Conduct mid-term and final evaluations of the ICIA and data frameworks. • Publish first comprehensive <i>State of the Islands Report</i>. • Revise Toolkit and annexes based on lessons learned. • Institutionalise island proofing in policy and budgetary processes.	NICU, OECD, SCB, SKR, <i>Regeringskansliet</i> .	Evaluation reports completed; revised Toolkit 2.0; island proofing institutionalised in Swedish policymaking.

Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

Capacity building ensures that all administrative levels possess the skills and resources necessary to apply island proofing tools effectively. The NICU, in collaboration with SKR and OECD, can coordinate training and peer learning programmes.

Key initiatives include:

- Development of an online training platform for ICIA and data use.
- Regional workshops on integrating island perspectives into transport, climate, and digital policies.
- Peer exchange between island municipalities and regional authorities.
- Annual *Island Governance Academy* for civil servants and policymakers.

Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring of the implementation roadmap will follow the principles and indicators defined in Annex D. NICU and SCB can coordinate annual data updates and progress reporting through the Island Data Dashboard. Reporting will feed into the *State of the Islands Report*, which provides policy feedback to ministries and parliament.

Annual milestones include:

- Yearly progress reports summarising ICIA completion rates and data quality.
- Integration of island indicators into national performance management.
- Dissemination of results at the *Island Policy Forum*.

Review and continuous improvement

A structured review process ensures learning and adaptation throughout implementation. Mid-term and final evaluations will assess effectiveness, efficiency, and institutionalisation of island proofing across Swedish governance levels.

Review milestones:

- **2027:** Mid-term evaluation by NICU and OECD; identify best practices and bottlenecks.
- **2030:** Final evaluation and presentation of revised Toolkit and policy recommendations.
- **Ongoing:** Continuous improvement based on data-driven monitoring and stakeholder feedback.