



Article from Ministry of Employment

# Initiatives in the Budget Bill for 2021 relating to Åsa Lindhagen's areas of responsibility

Published 25 September 2020

Read about the initiatives contained in the Budget Bill for 2021 relating to the areas of responsibility of the Minister for Gender Equality, with responsibility for anti-discrimination and anti-segregation. The Government's proposals are based on an agreement between the government parties, the Centre Party and the Liberal Party.

## Long-term initiatives in the Government's policy response to intimate partner violence (IPV)

The Government proposes that the county administrative boards' regional work to combat men's violence against women, honour-based violence and oppression, prostitution and trafficking in human beings continue on a permanent basis. The Government also proposes reinforcements to the municipalities for measures to prevent IPV reoffending.

Press release: Long-term initiatives in the Government's policy response to intimate partner violence (IPV)

## Government strengthens efforts against honour-based violence and oppression

The Government proposes that the national expert team at the Östergötland

County Administrative Board be developed and made permanent in the form of a national centre of expertise on honour-based violence and oppression. The Government also proposes an investment of SEK 180 million in 2021 to enhance professional expertise and for new assignments to relevant government agencies related to honour-based violence and oppression.

## **SEK 10 million for efforts to fight racism**

The Government proposes SEK 10 million to strengthen anti-racism efforts. Fighting racism, intolerance and discrimination requires long-term and organised work. Among other things, experiences of differential treatment in dealings with public authorities need to be taken seriously. It is essential that public authorities and other public services always treat individuals equally and in a legally secure manner; this requires continuous skills enhancement initiatives.

## **Better information about Swedish society for asylum seekers**

In addition to information that the Swedish Migration Agency provides to asylum seekers, there may be a need for more information about Swedish society and language initiatives for asylum seekers waiting for a decision on their asylum applications. The Government therefore proposes an additional SEK 60 million for information about Swedish society for asylum seekers. This entails highlighting important issues related to democracy, rights, obligations and opportunities in society. Gender equality, children's rights, and honour-based violence and oppression are other issues that can be raised.

## **Increased grants to municipalities with high refugee intake**

The Government proposes a one-year targeted government grant of SEK 200 million to municipalities with relatively high refugee intake. This grant was introduced in 2020 and will now be extended for one year and increased from the previous level of SEK 80 million. The aim of the proposal is to make it easier for municipalities to organise effective reception of newly arrived immigrants, which in turn creates conditions for settling in successfully and swiftly into working and community life.

## Social measures in socio-economically disadvantaged areas

There are a number of key actors involved in reducing and combating segregation. Additional funds can stimulate activities at local level that complement and strengthen municipalities' current efforts, not least in the area of crime prevention. This may include increased accessibility to social services, community workers or similar support. The proposal is for a reinforced general government grant for anti-segregation efforts of SEK 250 million per year in 2021–2023.

## Establishment of a human rights institute proposed

At a time when human rights are increasingly challenged, it is more important than ever to have structures that promote and protect human rights. The Government's proposal is to establish an institute in Sweden whose task will be to promote the protection of human rights. Broad parliamentary support will be sought for the formulation of the legislation and regulations for this new institute ahead of the reform. The proposal is for a SEK 25 million allocation in 2021 followed by yearly allocations to the institute of SEK 50 million per year.



Article from Ministry of Employment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

# Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Gender Equality attend meeting on international gender equality work in the wake of COVID-19

Published 01 September 2020

Some 70 participants from civil society organisations, the social partners and government agencies took part in a digital meeting on 26 August hosted by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen. Discussions covered the international coalition to work for financial gender equality, of which Sweden is one of the leaders, and international gender equality work in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“All over the world and at all levels, the Swedish Foreign Service has consistently stressed the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on gender equality and human rights and worked to ensure a response and building back that lead to improvements, including in the form of more influence for women and girls,” says Ms Linde.

To support advocacy work, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has developed targeted support for the Foreign Service and ensured that important status reports and impact analyses have been disseminated widely, both within the Foreign Service and among external actors and partners.

“Spring 2020 should have marked the start of a ‘super year’ of anniversaries, mobilisation and progress for global gender equality work. Instead, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of women being subjected to men’s violence and to discrimination and marginalisation, and has led to additional challenges in efforts to advance gender equality,” says Ms Lindhagen.

During Wednesday’s meeting, the ministers said that two major international gender equality forums had been postponed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that the focus was now on starting work in six global Action Coalitions to advance gender equality.

On 1 July, UN Women announced who would be included in the leadership teams of the Action Coalitions; Sweden is part of the leadership of the Action Coalition working on economic justice and rights, together with four other countries and a number of civil society and multilateral organisations. The next stage of this work is for the Action Coalitions to enter into dialogue and consultation with a view to developing concrete action plans to be launched in 2021.



Article from Ministry of Employment

**“We will not give up before every LGBTI-person in the world can live their lives freely.”**

Published 30 July 2020

"Most people think it is an obvious right to be who you are and to be allowed to love the person or persons you love. "

"But the fact is, in more than sixty countries in the world you can be fired for being gay. Almost seventy countries declare same-sex relationships illegal. And in many countries transpeople are forced to get sterilized.

Too many LGBTI persons are forced to hide who they are. I am bisexual, so I know how that feels. And my own country, Sweden, has a lot more to do.

This summer, we will not meet at Pride events like we usually do. It feels strange and sad. But this does not mean that the struggle for LGBTI persons full enjoyment of human rights should cease, we must continue in other ways. When authoritarian movements want to push back on human rights we have already won, we will respond with strengthening the respect for human rights further.

We will not give up before every LGBTI-person in the world can live their lives freely.

So happy pride everyone and take care."

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Transcript from webcast with Åsa Lindhagen, Minister for Gender Equality, with responsibility for anti-discrimination and anti-segregation.

Summer 2020



Article from Ministry of Employment

# Measures to address increased vulnerability due to the coronavirus

Published 07 May 2020

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus and the spread of the COVID-19 disease have resulted in a global crisis affecting human life and health. At the same time, the socio-economic consequences and financial impacts on many families are contributing to increased stress and anxiety. Crisis and disaster research shows that the crisis is affecting the population unequally. Those with the least resources and in the most disadvantaged circumstances are generally those who suffer the greatest strain.

The coronavirus crisis threatens to exacerbate the vulnerability of children and young people at risk in their home environment. The same applies to victims of domestic violence and ‘honour’-based violence and oppression, including women, children, young women, older people, LGBTI people and people with disabilities. Greater isolation can increase the incidence of violence and control. Those who are vulnerable might also find it more difficult to receive information and seek support.

In light of the consequences of the COVID-19 virus and its impact on already vulnerable groups, the Government today intends to decide on two assignments:

- an assignment to the Swedish Gender Equality Agency to reach victims of violence

- a new ordinance on government grants that will enable the National Board of Health and Welfare to allocate SEK 100 million to non-profit organisations.

## Assignment to the Swedish Gender Equality Agency

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency has been tasked with identifying and developing effective working methods that municipalities can use to spread information about domestic violence and ‘honour’-based violence and oppression, and to establish contact with victims of violence. The work will be based on the specific circumstances and conditions resulting from the outbreak of COVID-19. The working methods should be useful in the municipalities’ activities. The assignment to the Agency also includes disseminating the working methods to the municipalities.

The Agency will receive SEK 1.8 million in 2020 to carry out this assignment. The assignment should be carried out without delay and the report delivered to the Government (Ministry of Employment) by 26 February 2021.

## National Board of Health and Welfare to allocate SEK 100 million to non-profit organisations

The Government intends to adopt an ordinance on government grants to allocate SEK 100 million to non-profit organisation activities addressing increased vulnerability resulting from the outbreak of COVID-19. The money will go to organisations that work with children at risk and with women, children and LGBTI people who are victims of violence; it will also go to organisations working to end domestic violence and ‘honour’-based violence and oppression.

Non-profit organisations that have been operating for at least two years will be eligible to apply for the grant. The National Board of Health and Welfare will be allocating the grants and will therefore soon be providing information about the application process. The money must be used in 2020.

The decisions regarding the two assignments are based on an agreement between the Swedish Social Democratic Party, the Green Party, the Centre Party and the Liberals.



Article from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Employment

# The same power to shape society and their own lives – the work of Sweden's feminist government continues

Published 08 March 2020 Updated 08 March 2020

All government policy must redistribute power and resources for a more gender-equal society. The goal is to ensure that women and men have the same power to shape society and their own lives.

"I am proud to lead the world's first feminist government. International rankings show that we have come a long way in our gender equality efforts. But we are not finished yet – we will continue our work until women and men have the same power to shape society and their own lives. Today is International Women's Day. This is an important day that reminds us that we cannot rest on our laurels", says Prime Minister Stefan Löfven.

"So far during this electoral period we have conducted major initiatives to combat men's violence against women and honour-based violence and oppression. In 2019, more than SEK 460 million was invested, and for 2020 the Government has so far taken decisions on investments amounting to over SEK 300 million in this area. We also recently appointed a commission on gender-equal lifetime earnings. But at the same time, much remains to be done before we have achieved gender equality. Women generally have lower wages than men, take more sick leave and take greater responsibility for unpaid household and care work. Far too many are also subjected to violence by men with whom they have close relationships. This is why we must continue to move gender equality work forward", says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen.





Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Infrastructure

# Several Ministers participated in commemorating Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January

Published 30 January 2020

On Holocaust Remembrance Day January 27 several representatives from the Swedish Government participated in memorial services to honour the victims of the Holocaust and to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven attended a memorial ceremony at Auschwitz-Birkenau to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation. The memorial service began in Auschwitz and ended with a candle lighting ceremony in Birkenau.

Minister for Education Anna Ekström spoke at a memorial service arranged by the Council of Roma representatives in Malmö and then at a memorial service arranged by the Jewish Community of Malmö in the Synagogue of Malmö.

Minister for Home Affairs Mikael Damberg spoke at a ceremony arranged by The Living History Forum at Raoul Wallenberg's Square and then at the memorial ceremony in the Great Synagogue of Stockholm. Minister for Environment and Deputy Prime and Climate Isabella Lövin, Minister for Justice and Migration Morgan Johansson and Minister for Financial Markets and Housing Per Bolund also participated at the ceremony in the Great Synagogue.

Minister for Culture and Democracy Amanda Lind visited the Jewish Community of Gothenburg and spoke at the memorial ceremony in the evening.

Minister for Gender Equality, with responsibility for anti-discrimination and anti-segregation Åsa Lindhagen spoke at the memorial ceremony at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

Further Minister for Energy and Digital Development Anders Ygeman and Minister for Justice and Migration Morgan Johansson participated in a memorial service at the The Royal Dramatic Theatre.



Article from Ministry of Employment

# Åsa Lindhagen hosted EU ministerial meeting on gender equality in Stockholm

Published 06 December 2019

At the initiative of Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen, an EU ministerial meeting on gender equality – The STHLM Initiative – took place in Stockholm on 3–4 December. Ms Lindhagen invited Finland, which currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and the other EU Member States that will hold the Presidency in the coming years.

The aim of The STHLM Initiative was to help the EU sharpen its tools for sustainable gender mainstreaming, with a focus on economic equality, and to examine how Member States can best lead this work during their presidencies. The meeting discussed a number of key issues for the EU's future gender equality work, including the upcoming gender equality strategy, gender-equal economies, implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and the work to end men's violence against women and honour-based violence and oppression.

The meeting was attended by representatives of nine other EU countries and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

“Now that the EU has a new Commission and a new parliament, we have a window of opportunity to put gender equality at the top of the European agenda. It is extremely important that Sweden pushes for greater gender equality throughout the EU,” says Ms Lindhagen.





Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Employment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice

# Sweden's national UPR report submitted to UN

Published 15 October 2019

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique mechanism of the United Nations Human Rights Council that involves a periodic review of the human rights situation in all UN Member States. It is now time for Sweden to be reviewed within the framework of the third cycle of the UPR.

The UPR is a well-established instrument in the work to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The review, which takes place in Geneva, is conducted by other States and all issues related to human rights can be raised. On 14 October, Sweden therefore submitted a national report to the UN on the follow-up of the recommendations to Sweden from the previous review stage in January 2015. The review stage will take place on 27 January 2020 when Sweden participates in a dialogue in the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The Government considers the UPR process to be of major importance in the work to protect and promote human rights, both at home and abroad. Through constructive dialogue, and in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including civil society organisations, Sweden is working through the UPR to attain greater transparency on the situation for human rights.

“We are living in a time that, for the first time in a very long time, requires the international agreements on human rights to be respected and taken very seriously. The Government is aware that challenges remain in the work to protect and promote human rights in Sweden, and is determined to prioritise

the work to overcome them,” says Minister Åsa Lindhagen.

The objective of human rights policy is to ensure full respect for Sweden’s international human rights commitments. The objective underscores that it is a central task for the Government to ensure that Sweden’s international commitments are complied with in all parts of the country and in all public sector areas – nationally, regionally and locally.



Article from Ministry of Employment

# exchange of experiences regarding violence prevention work

Published 02 October 2019

On 16 and 17 September the Ministry of Employment and the European Commission hosted a seminar on violence prevention with a focus on men, boys and masculine norms. Representatives from 15 EU countries took part. Participants visited Botkyrka municipality, where they received information on the joint efforts by social services, police and schools to prevent violence.

Domestic violence against women is estimated to cost society several billion kronor a year in Sweden. A few years ago, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) calculated the corresponding cost for the entire EU as more than two trillion kronor. Counteracting violence against women is a priority issue for the Government and the EU. In 2016 the Government adopted a ten-year national strategy for the period 2017–2026 with the principal objective of developing society's work on violence prevention. Research and experiences show that violence needs to be prevented at an early stage and that this work needs to include boys and men to achieve a change.

“Men's violence against women must cease. This requires political engagement and effective violence prevention work with the focus on men and boys in Sweden and the world. I hope that this seminar was an important first step in developing cooperation on these issues within the EU,” says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen.

The Government is investing SEK 1.5 billion to implement the national strategy during the period 2017–2020, which includes:

- Assignments and funds to the county councils so they can support the municipalities in their work.
- A gender policy agreement with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), which covers financing the support to the municipalities.
- Grants to non-profit organisations.

The European seminar participants made a study visit to Botkyrka, a municipality that has succeeded in establishing permanent violence prevention work in compulsory schools and upper secondary schools with social services and the police. In Botkyrka, the violence prevention work starts very early, in antenatal care. Then the work continues in preschool, school and through non-profit organisations such as sports associations. The violence prevention work also aims to involve parents at an early stage, to build up mutual trust.

Seminar participants heard how the county administrative board in Västerbotten is working with the organisation MÄN to support violence prevention work with young people in four of the county's sparsely populated municipalities.



Article from Ministry of Employment

# Major investment for increased gender equality and reduced violence and oppression

Published 20 September 2019

The Government has previously planned SEK 290 million for the implementation of gender equality policy in 2020, of which the majority will go to measures to prevent and combat men's violence against women and honour-related violence and oppression. The Government is now proposing an extra SEK 155 million. The investment is part of an agreement between the government parties, the Centre Party and the Liberal Party.

Of the new investment of SEK 155 million, SEK 45 million is earmarked for the work to combat honour-related violence and oppression. SEK 10 million will go to the work to combat men's violence against women and SEK 100 million to non-profit women's and girls' shelters. The funds will strengthen initiatives within the framework of the Government's national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women and honour-related violence and oppression.

It is important that the work to combat men's violence against women and honour-related violence and oppression, and the support provided to victims of sexual offences continue and are developed. The violence prevention work needs to continue to be developed, not least measures for young men and boys. The same applies to relapse prevention work to stop violence being repeated. Government agencies, municipalities and health and medical care need better access to methods and support to increase the detection of

exposure to violence.

The funds are expected to contribute to effective measures to counter the occurrence and reoccurrence of violence, with the aim of stopping men's violence against women and honour-related violence and oppression. SEK 100 million of the Government's investment will go to non-profit women's and girls' shelters. Non-profit women's and girls' shelters do important work for very vulnerable groups. The Government wants to support civil society while also contributing to functioning support to victims of crime in municipalities' and regions' areas of responsibility.

“Stopping men's violence against women is a priority objective for the Government. We will redouble our efforts to combat honour-related violence and oppression, through increased knowledge, better support measures and tougher sentences. Women and men and girls and boys must have the same rights and opportunities to bodily integrity. It is unacceptable that a large proportion of women and girls are subjected to sexual or physical violence or psychological abuse. With the Government's investment, we are now redoubling our efforts against violence and oppression,” says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen.



Article from Ministry of Employment

# Historic investment to combat racism and strengthen equal rights for LGBTI people

Published 19 September 2019

The Government is making several investments to combat racism and strengthen the rights of LGBTI people. The Government is strengthening the national plan to combat racism and hate crime with SEK 10 million per year from 2020. At the same time, the work to strengthen the rights of LGBTI people will receive SEK 14 million per year from 2020, and temporary additional funds of SEK 10 million per year are planned for 2021 and 2022. It is the biggest ever investment in the area by any government.

## Investments to combat racism

The Swedish Security Service 2018 Yearbook states: “A xenophobic and radical nationalist current, most evident online, is on the rise in Sweden. This contributes to a picture of a growing broad radical nationalism including radical and violent groups.” It is the Government’s view that these currents and racist organisations spread, for example, antisemitic, Islamophobic and Afrophobic messages.

Increased awareness and knowledge are required in order to address and handle racism’s breeding grounds. Hate crime will be prevented and combated. Crime victims must see that society takes these crimes – and the vulnerability of victims – very seriously.

The Government therefore wants to strengthen the national plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime. This will provide scope for continued and new measures within the framework of the plan's five strategic areas:

- More knowledge, education and research.
- Improved coordination and monitoring.
- Civil society: greater support and more in-depth dialogue.
- Strengthening preventive measures online.
- A more active legal system.
- The Government intends to allocate SEK 10 million to the national plan per year from 2020 onwards.

## The rights of LGBTQ people will be strengthened

In recent years, several reforms have been made that have strengthened the rights of LGBTI people. Despite this, there are still major challenges throughout the world, including in Sweden. Same-sex couples risk difficulties when they become parents because of legislation that is not tailored to the needs of rainbow families. LGBTI people have poorer mental health than the general population, and the situation for transgender people is particularly worrying.

The reform efforts must therefore continue so that LGBTI people can live in freedom, with full respect for their rights and identities.

The Government intends to strengthen the efforts through an action plan for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTI people, which will complement other measures and act as a focal point for efforts in the future. SEK 14 million is to be allocated for the action plan per year from 2020, and time-limited additional funds of SEK 10 million per year are planned for 2021 and 2022.

The action plan will focus on current challenges and concrete measures. The action plan will reinforce and complement the strategy for equal rights and opportunities irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression and will focus on current challenges and concrete measures. Organisations that represent LGBTI people's equal rights will be invited to take part in dialogue on the content of the action plan.

The investment clearly shows that the situation for LGBTI people is a priority issue for the Government and that it is work that needs to be long-

term.

“When parts of society become unsympathetic to the concept of the equal value of all people, we must protect the steps that have been made, but more importantly, take new steps forward. This is why we are now making a historic investment to combat racism and strengthen equal rights for LGBTI people,” says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Employment

# All people must have control over their own lives

Published 14 May 2019

Listen to Åsa Lindhagen, Minister for Gender Equality with responsibility for anti-discrimination and anti-segregation, talk about what changes she wants to see and which issue she will be addressing first.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

# Minister for Gender Equality to highlight Consent Act at summit on girls' and women's rights

Published 11 March 2019

Åsa Lindhagen will be heading the Swedish delegation at the 63rd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York on 11–22 March. This year's theme – social protection systems – is intended to highlight global challenges for gender equality.

## Global gender equality challenges

CSW is the foremost intergovernmental body working to strengthen the situation of women. Through negotiations, the member countries agree on joint conclusions to strengthen women's rights in a number of areas. The delegation includes politicians and officials from the Government Offices and the Riksdag, as well as representatives of several government agencies and civil society organisations.

“Gender equality is a fundamental matter of human rights, democracy and social justice. Women and men must have the same power to shape society and their own lives,” says Åsa Lindhagen.

## Seminar on the Consent Act and family planning

Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen will speak in the UN General Assembly and will also host a seminar in collaboration with the She Decides movement on the subject of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

“We will continue our extensive support for sexual and reproductive health

and rights, at the normative level as well as financially. For example, Sweden is funding initiatives for safe and legal abortions, contraceptives and comprehensive sexuality education,” says Åsa Lindhagen.

Sweden will also host a seminar about sexual offences legislation and provide information about Sweden’s new Consent Act.

“We will share information on our new sexual offences legislation and an information campaign linked to this. This legislation is based on consent and states the obvious: if sex is not voluntary, it is illegal. Stopping men’s violence against women is a priority issue for my Government,” says Åsa Lindhagen.



Article from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Employment

# Feminist policy must make a difference in people's daily lives and experiences

Published 07 March 2019

Since 21 January 2019, Sweden has a new feminist Government. “We will use our policies to build a society in which all people have equal value and equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities, and in which no one is limited by their gender,” say Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen.

## A more gender-equal society

“We’re now proudly and vigorously continuing to build a gender-equal society for everyone, a society where women and men, girls and boys can live their lives to their full potential, where no one is held back. This is how we build a stronger society and a safer Sweden,” says Stefan Löfven.

The Government will take decisions and implement policies that offer new opportunities for those living in Sweden. The Government’s overall policy will redistribute power and resources for a more gender-equal society; the aim is for women and men to have the same power to shape society and their own lives.

## A matter of human rights

Gender equality is also a matter of human rights. With a clear gender perspective in its policies, the Government wants to achieve more in

developing all areas of society. Gender equality is part of the solution to the challenges Sweden is facing. To tackle the challenges in the labour market, integration, schools and health care, the Government has to understand and take into account the needs and prevailing circumstances of women, men, girls and boys.

“To achieve more and take new steps, the Government will continue to include the gender perspective in all our efforts and continue to implement a gender responsive budget. A feminist government allocates resources and takes decisions that result in gender equality,” say Stefan Löfven and Åsa Lindhagen.

## All ministers are pursuing feminist policy

“I am proud to be Minister for Gender Equality in a feminist government, with overall responsibility for our gender equality policy. But the work is carried out by all my minister colleagues; Sweden actually has 22 gender equality ministers, not just one. All ministers in the Government pursue a feminist policy in their respective policy areas,” says Åsa Lindhagen.

Being a feminist government means that the Government wants to make a difference in people’s daily lives and experiences. The Government will redouble its efforts to combat violence and oppression, and will prevent and combat both men’s violence against women and honour-related violence and oppression. Children and young people must live secure lives, in school and at home. The Government will also continue to promote the economic empowerment of women, and combat women’s ill health. The integration of women and men who come to Sweden must work better. The Government want integration to be feminist, with a clear gender perspective.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

# Review of Sweden's action to combat violence against women and domestic violence

Published 01 February 2019

The Council of Europe has published its first review of how Sweden is fulfilling its commitments under the organisation's convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention). The Convention, to which Sweden acceded in 2014, is the most comprehensive and detailed instrument for human rights in this area.

In September 2017, the Government submitted a report on Swedish conditions and initiatives to comply with the Istanbul Convention to the Council of Europe's expert group GREVIO. In February 2018, GREVIO held a dialogue on this work with a Swedish delegation in Strasbourg and, the following month, GREVIO visited Sweden for meetings with representatives of the Government, public authorities, municipalities, county councils and civil society. On Friday 25 January 2019, the Council of Europe adopted GREVIO's recommendations to Sweden.

## **A fundamental challenge for gender equality**

The Istanbul Convention concerns measures against all forms of violence against women and girls, including honour-related violence and oppression. It also aims to combat all forms of domestic violence, including against children.

In its review report, GREVIO appreciates that Sweden considers violence against women to be a fundamental challenge for gender equality and holds

Sweden up as a leading country in gender equality policy. In particular, GREVIO highlights the Violence against Women Reform of 1998, the introduction of the gross violation of a woman's integrity as an offence and the new consent-based sexual offences legislation of 2018. Furthermore, GREVIO praises Sweden for its work on an evidence-based approach to the areas covered by the Convention.

### **Recommendations from GREVIO**

GREVIO also makes a total of 41 recommendations to Sweden. Eight of these recommendations are particularly strong, which is to say that, according to GREVIO, Sweden should immediately remedy these shortcomings. Sweden has also submitted explanatory comments to GREVIO's report which are published separately on the Council of Europe website. By January 2022 at the latest, the Government is expected to deliver a report on how the Council of Europe's recommendations on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention have been managed in Sweden.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

# Åsa Lindhagen

Published 30 January 2019

On Monday 21 January, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven presented the Statement of Government Policy in the Riksdag and announced the ministers that make up the Government. Åsa Lindhagen is Minister for Gender Equality, with responsibility for anti-discrimination and anti-segregation.

“We are a feminist government. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency will remain,” announced Stefan Löfven in the Statement of Government Policy on 21 January.

The Government has appointed Karin Strandås as State Secretary to Åsa Lindhagen, Minister for Gender Equality, with responsibility for anti-discrimination and anti-segregation.

Statement of Government Policy 21 January 2019

State Secretary to Åsa Lindhagen

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency



Article from Ministry of Employment

# Questions and answers about incorporating UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Swedish law

Published 17 April 2018 Updated 16 January 2020

On 1st of January 2020 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Act (2018:1197) entered into force.

## Why does the Government want to incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into Swedish law?

The Government considers that despite strategic measures and the fact that the rights of the child are regularly transformed into applicable law and have been reflected in new legislation, these rights have not had a sufficient impact on decision-making processes concerning children. Nor has the fact that the CRC involves obligations for central and local government had a sufficient impact on activities.

The Government considers that it needs to be made clearer that Sweden's commitments under the CRC must be ensured at all levels in public sector activities and that a child rights-based approach should permeate all activities concerning children and young people.

Incorporation of the CRC gives it the status of Swedish law, entailing a clearer obligation on courts and legal practitioners to consider the rights that follow from the CRC in deliberations and assessments that are part of decision-making processes in cases and matters concerning children.

Giving the CRC the status of Swedish law, and with support and knowledge-enhancing measures, it is considered that a child rights-based approach will have an impact in practice.

## In what way do the rights of the child have insufficient impact?

The Inquiry on the rights of the child found in its surveys that the impact of children's rights and of a child rights-based approach has been insufficient in many ways, including when it comes to the principle of the best interests of the child and the child's right to express their views.

The Government considers that despite strategic measures and the fact that the rights of the child are regularly transformed into applicable law and have been reflected in new legislation, these rights have not had a sufficient impact on decision-making processes concerning children. Nor has the fact that the CRC involves obligations for central and local government had a sufficient impact on activities.

## How can the rights of the child be expected to have a greater impact on the application of the law in Sweden if the CRC is incorporated into Swedish law?

Incorporation of the CRC gives it the status of Swedish law, entailing a clearer obligation on courts and legal practitioners to consider the rights that follow from the CRC in deliberations and assessments that are part of decision-making processes in cases and matters concerning children.

Incorporation means that the child's role as a legal entity with specific rights of their own is made clearer and can therefore be expected to contribute to greater focus on the child in situations concerning the child.

In the Government's view, incorporation of the CRC will help give visibility to the rights of the child and is a way of creating a foundation for a more child rights-based approach in all public sector activities, in which these rights are seen from a holistic perspective.

All of the measures presented by the Government in the bill (prop. 2017/18:186) in the form of an act on the UN Convention on the Rights of

the Child, the guidance document, the knowledge boost and continued systematic transformation work should be seen as a single package to ensure that the Convention gains traction.

## What will the difference be between the CRC as a legal act and as a ratified convention?

Incorporation will make the provisions of the CRC applicable as law and may – with the reservation that all the provisions are not directly applicable in each individual case – form the basis of decisions by public authorities in cases and matters in which the CRC's provisions are not explicitly stated in other legislation.

Incorporation of the CRC makes clear that other legislation concerning children, such as the provisions of the Children and Parents Code, the Aliens Act, the Education Act, the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments and the Social Services Act, must be interpreted on the basis of the CRC in its entirety and not only on the basis of the provisions transformed into each act.

Incorporation will make the Convention as a whole more visible and it will be clear that the rights contained in the Convention are interlinked and should be interpreted in relation to each other, and that they are brought together in one and the same act. The Convention will be a cohesive regulatory framework to relate to.

## Are other measures needed to strengthen implementation of the rights of the child?

All of the measures presented by the Government in the bill (prop. 2017/18:186) in the form of an act on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the guidance document, the knowledge boost and continued systematic transformation work should be seen as a single package to ensure that the Convention has an impact.

For the CRC to have an impact, continued transformation of the CRC's provisions into national law is necessary, alongside incorporation. Moreover, a combination of various measures is necessary, such as guidance, education and coordination between different actors at different levels in society.

In its bill, the Government therefore states that a guidance document should

be produced to support the methodical interpretation and application of the CRC. The Government also lists the measures under way to increase knowledge about the CRC among children and young people, and in municipalities, county councils and government agencies through a knowledge boost. Further, the Government describes the need for continued and systematic transformation work to enable the CRC to continue having an impact on legislation and to be made visible in the preparatory work for legislation, where the Convention may be relevant.

The Government has also decided to task an Inquiry Chair with conducting a survey to shed light on how compatible Swedish legislation and practice are with the CRC. The aim of the survey is to provide support in future work on the transformation of the CRC's provisions in various areas of law. The Government also describes measures to better coordinate the dialogue with civil society organisations on issues concerning children's rights.

## How will children in Sweden notice that the CRC is part of Swedish law?

Incorporation of the CRC entails a clearer obligation on legal practitioners to consider the rights that follow from the CRC in deliberations and assessments that are part of decision-making processes in cases and matters concerning children.

In addition, incorporation means that the child's role as a legal entity with specific rights of their own is made clearer and can therefore be expected to contribute to greater focus on the child in situations concerning the child.

## How do other acts relate to the CRC?

In principle, the incorporation does not entail any new tasks for practitioners, since legislation is already to be interpreted in accordance with the CRC (consistent interpretation). However, incorporation entails a clearer obligation on legal practitioners to consider the rights that follow from the CRC in deliberations and assessments that are part of decision-making processes in cases and matters concerning children, and interpret Swedish provisions in relation to the CRC based on customary principles of interpretation.

Incorporation of the CRC makes clear that other legislation concerning children, such as the provisions of the Children and Parents Code, the Aliens

Act, the Education Act, the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments and the Social Services Act, must be interpreted on the basis of the CRC in its entirety and not only on the basis of the provisions transformed into each act.

Incorporation will make the provisions of the CRC applicable as law and may – with the reservation that all the provisions are not directly applicable in each individual case – form the basis of decisions by public authorities in cases and matters in which the CRC's provisions are not explicitly stated in other legislation. Incorporation of the CRC does not mean that it takes precedence over other legislation. How any incompatibility between the incorporated CRC and other legislation is to be settled must be determined by means of general legal principles of interpretation.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Employment

# Swedish Government decides on important step towards establishing human rights institute

Published 28 January 2021

The Swedish Government has decided today to refer a proposal concerning a human rights institute to the Council on Legislation for consideration. The Government's decision is an important step towards establishing the institute.

The new institute will monitor, investigate and report on how human rights are respected and realised in Sweden. The institute will also submit proposals to the Government on measures that are needed to safeguard human rights. The institute will not examine individual complaints of human rights violations.

“International human rights commitments must be taken very seriously. Current developments around the world are increasingly causing the equal worth of all people to be called in to question. In such times, it is more important than ever to have structures that promote and protect human rights. It is therefore important that the Government is now taking the next step in establishing an independent national human rights institute in Sweden.” says Åsa Lindhagen, Minister for Gender Equality, with responsibility for anti-discrimination and anti-segregation.

The final reports following the UN Universal Periodic Reviews of Sweden conducted in 2015 and 2020 recommended establishing an independent human rights institute in accordance with the Paris Principles. The Paris Principles set out minimum requirements for human rights institutions. These principles are applied widely and are the generally accepted standard for

national human rights institutions.

The tasks and management of the institute and certain aspects of its organisation and methodology must be regulated by law to meet the requirements of the Paris Principles, but this will also strengthen the institute's independence. This means that the Government cannot govern the institute's tasks or work to the same extent that normally applies to public agencies under the Government. The Government considers that such a regulation ensures a long-term approach and continuity for the institute while cementing its ability to perform its tasks independently.

It is proposed that the human rights institute commence its activities on 1 January 2022.



Press release from Ministry of Employment

# Government strengthens work for the equal rights and opportunities of LGBTIQ people

Published 25 January 2021

The Government has adopted an action plan for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ people. The action plan contains concrete measures to strengthen the rights and opportunities of LGBTIQ people in the coming years. The action plan applies until 2023 but also contains strategic initiatives to ensure that the efforts continue in the long-term.

“LGBTIQ people still experience discrimination and serious violations in all areas of life: at work, at school, in business, in contact with government agencies and in other public activities. This is unacceptable and we are therefore focusing on creating real and lasting change,” says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen.

In Sweden, the equal rights of LGBTIQ people have been strengthened through various reforms in recent decades. These reforms have contributed to increased openness in society. However, challenges remain. Many LGBTIQ people still feel unable to be open about their sexual orientation or identity at work and at school. In general, young LGBTIQ people, not least young transgender people, have poorer mental health than the rest of the population.

Through the action plan, the Government is taking further steps to strengthen the equal rights and opportunities of LGBTIQ people. The action plan includes measures in a number of focus areas that, among other things, aim to combat discrimination, violence and other violations, increase knowledge

in working life and about the situation and mental health of young LGBTIQ people, and particularly focus on suicide prevention efforts. The intersex perspective is also included and measures are being taken to increase knowledge about the situation and needs of intersex people, both in healthcare and in society at large.

Young LGBTIQ people are more vulnerable at school than anywhere else in society. Work is now being intensified to provide a safer school environment for young LGBTIQ people. The National Agency for Education and the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society are to continue their work on equal rights and a more inclusive school environment for young LGBTIQ people. As part of this work, the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden is being instructed to investigate the needs for further development and efforts required to make school a safer and more inclusive place for young transgender and non-binary people.

“All children and young people must attend school and it is therefore particularly important that it is a safe place where everyone can feel that they can be themselves. We are now instructing the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden to investigate how we can create better conditions for this to happen in concrete terms,” says Ms Lindhagen.

SEK 14 million is to be allocated for the action plan per year from 2020, and an additional SEK 10 million per year in temporary funding is planned for 2021 and 2022.



Press release from Ministry of Employment

# Government intensifies efforts against men's violence against women and honour-related violence and oppression

Published 19 January 2021 Updated 19 January 2021

Preventing and combating men's violence against women and honour-related violence and oppression is a highly prioritised issue for the Government. By adopting decision on the appropriation directions for 2021, the Government has allocated SEK 240 million to efforts combating violence and given several government agencies assignments in this area. Several assignments will focus on stopping honour-related violence and oppression. An additional SEK 130 million has also been allocated to the county administrative boards and municipalities to support efforts to combat violence. Several anti-violence initiatives are expected in 2021, with additional funds earmarked for this purpose.

Efforts to combat men's violence against women and honour-related violence and oppression must be implemented across all segments of society. For this reason, the Government decided ahead of 2021 to issue assignments to several government agencies – some of which will now have a more active role in this work. Several of the assignments will focus on stopping honour-related violence and oppression, including child and forced marriages, and genital mutilation.

- The National Agency for Education will be allocated SEK 11 million to strengthen systematic efforts to combat honour-related violence and oppression within the school system.
- The National Board of Institutional Care will be allocated SEK 3 million to develop and disseminate internal knowledge about honour-related violence and oppression, violence-prevention work with boys, young men and young people's partner relationships, including knowledge about destructive masculinity norms.
- The National Board of Health and Welfare will be allocated SEK 20 million to continue to support development of work within health care and social services concerning men's violence against women and honour-related violence and oppression.
- A portion of the funds allocated to the National Board of Health and Welfare will pay for operation of the Choose to Stop (Välj att sluta) telephone helpline for people seeking to alter violent behaviour in a close relationship. The helpline is important for preventative efforts and has already proven to serve a beneficial function.
- The Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Swedish Public Employment Service and the Swedish Migration Agency will continue their efforts to better identify people at risk of violence in close relationships and honour-related violence and oppression among those whom they encounter in their activities. Together with the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, these government agencies will be allocated SEK 10 million.

It is important to the Government that violence-prevention efforts and support for people at risk of violence are a long-term undertaking. As announced earlier, the Swedish Expert Team established at the Östergötland County Administrative Board to prevent and counteract honour-related violence and oppression will be made permanent as a national centre of expertise. The Östergötland County Administrative Board will be allocated SEK 30 million for the assignment of preparing the establishment of the centre of expertise. The centre of expertise will have a supporting role for many government agencies in their assignments concerning honour-related violence and oppression.

Work on the development of resource centres to counteract honour-related violence and oppression will continue and, for this purpose, SEK 10 million will be allocated to the county administrative boards in 2021. The county administrative boards have long been tasked with combating men's violence against women and honour-related violence and oppression. As announced earlier, they will therefore be allocated SEK 100 million per year, starting in

2021. Municipalities will be allocated SEK 30 million for 2021 to improve relapse prevention measures targeted at perpetrators of violence. This is also a permanent initiative expected to increase to SEK 60 million per year starting in 2022.

Knowledge-enhancing measures are an important part of the efforts to combat men's violence against women. Some examples of training grants on which the Government decided ahead of 2021:

- The Swedish Gender Equality Agency will be allocated SEK 5 million to continue to offer training initiatives and knowledge support concerning men's violence against women and honour-related violence and oppression for teachers and those responsible for education at higher education institutions. Others involved in this initiative are the Swedish Expert Team at the Östergötland County Administrative Board, the National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women and the national knowledge centre Barnafriid, based at Linköping University.
- Barnafriid will be allocated SEK 2 million for a renewed assignment to conduct education initiatives for Barnahus activities concerning honour-related violence and oppression in its various forms of expression, such as child and forced marriages, and genital mutilation.
- The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society will be allocated SEK 4 million for information campaigns concerning honour-related violence and oppression, health and gender equality, prostitution and trafficking in human beings. The information will be directed to professionals and other adults who, in their work or involvement in non-profit organisations, encounter young, newly arrived immigrants and young asylum seekers.

The national telephone helpline for women exposed to violence, Kvinnofriidslinjen, has seen an increased number of calls during the past year. The National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women (NCK) based at Uppsala University, which operates the telephone helpline, will be allocated SEK 10 million to continue efforts to strengthen and develop work with the helpline.

The Government continues to support civil society's efforts to combat men's violence against women:

- The National Board of Health and Welfare will be allocated SEK 100 million to distribute as government grants to local women's and girls' shelters, with over SEK 23 million going to national organisations that

combat violence against women and children, and SEK 2 million to LGBTI people who are victims of crime for violence in close relationships, including honour-related violence and oppression.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Employment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

# Sweden increases its support to combat violence against women and children

Published 25 November 2020

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, men's violence against women and violence in close relationships is increasing. Sweden therefore intends to contribute SEK 122 million to efforts to eliminate men's violence against women and violence in close relationships, combat violence against children and strengthen sexual and reproductive health and rights.

These funds will go to UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), supplementing the recently decided funds to the Global Fund, the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and an increased appropriation to Sweden's strategy for sexual and reproductive health and rights in sub-Saharan Africa.

Gender inequality, men's violence against women and violence in close relationships are increasing around the world as a consequence of COVID-19. In addition, human rights are threatened as a result of the pandemic. We cannot accept that development gains are being reversed. Sweden is therefore providing further funding to this important work.

Violence against children is unacceptable, regardless of where in the world it occurs. Combating violence against children is a priority issue for the Government, and the fact that we are now providing operational support to the Global Partnership is part of this effort. The Partnership provides support to projects that combat violence against children, primarily in low- and middle-income countries.

## FACTS

- Sweden intends to allocate SEK 51 million to UN Women (Government decision 26 November 2020)
- Sweden intends to allocate SEK 71 million to UNFPA (Government decision 26 November 2020)
- Sweden will allocate SEK 6.75 million to the Global Partnership (decision taken 3 November 2020)
- Sweden's long-term efforts for sexual and reproductive health and rights in sub-Saharan Africa has been increased by SEK 40 million (decision taken 29 October 2020)



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Employment

# Long-term initiatives in the Government's policy response to intimate partner violence (IPV)

Published 15 September 2020

In the Budget Bill for 2021, the Government proposes that the county administrative boards' regional work to combat men's violence against women, honour-based violence and oppression, prostitution, and trafficking in human beings continue on a permanent basis. The Government also proposes reinforcements to the municipalities for measures to prevent IPV reoffending. The Government's proposals are based on an agreement between the government parties, the Centre Party and the Liberal Party.

In the Government's view, it is important that violence prevention and support to victims are long-term. For this reason, the Government wants to provide better and more stable conditions for the county administrative boards' gender equality efforts at regional level, focusing on preventing and combating men's violence against women, IPV, honour-based violence and oppression, prostitution and trafficking in human beings. It is therefore proposed that the long-term task of the county administrative boards in this area continue on a permanent basis. This investment is worth SEK 100 million per year.

Outside of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, responsibility for relapse prevention for perpetrators of violence is unclear and, in many parts of the country, work has been insufficient despite high rates of IPV relapse. It is essential to protect victims of IPV from recurrence of violence, and that

action to achieve this is taken throughout the country. The Government therefore intends to increase general government grants to municipalities by SEK 30 million in 2021 and by SEK 60 million per year from 2022. Measures to prevent IPV reoffending may include, for example, behavioural interventions for perpetrators of IPV.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Employment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

# Ann Linde and Åsa Lindhagen to participate in Global Pride

Published 26 June 2020

The virtual Global Pride festival kicks off on 27 June. Artists, politicians and activists from around the world will take part in the 26-hour livestream event.

- States and governments all have the same responsibility to respect and safeguard our human rights. And yet people around the world continue to be subjected to violence and discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Ms Linde and Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen have both contributed to the Global Pride programme via pre-recorded video greetings.

- This is a day to celebrate diversity and the right of every person to be proud of who they are, define their own identity and love whoever they like. Sweden remains a strong voice for human rights regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, says Ms Linde.

In her video greeting, Ms Lindhagen says:

- As authoritarian forces try to suppress human rights that have already been won, we must instead strengthen respect for human rights even further. Far too many LGBTI people are forced to hide who they are. As a bisexual person, I myself know how it feels, and my own country, Sweden, still has a great deal left to do. We will not rest until every LGBTI person in the world can live their life in freedom, says Ms Lindhagen.

LGBTI associations in more than 90 countries have contributed films to the virtual festival. These will be shown over a 26-hour period, interspersed with a number of major stage shows. Former US Vice President Joe Biden and

Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau are among those taking part. As well as politicians, there will be appearances by musicians, drag queens and activists.

Ms Linde's and Ms Lindhagen's greetings will be available on [government.se](http://government.se) following the event.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Employment

# Minister for Gender Equality welcomes OECD report on LGBTI inclusion

Published 24 June 2020

The OECD has released a report on how LGBTI people are included in the legislative frameworks in its member countries. The release coincides with Global Pride 2020, the worldwide digital festival taking place on 27 June. Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen welcomes the OECD expanding its work to include LGBTI rights.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has released its first ever report on LGBTI rights. Sweden is among the group of countries that initiated this report.

The OECD concludes that discrimination against LGBTI people harms not only LGBTI individuals but also the wider society, for example through poorer returns on educational investment resulting from discrimination in the labour market. Poor mental and physical health among LGBTI people is a personal tragedy for those affected, but it also has a negative impact on productivity, resulting in economic loss.

“The full enjoyment of human rights by LGBTI people is essential for both the individual and society. I am therefore very pleased that the OECD, as a significant actor in countries’ economic development, is highlighting this issue. The report shows that Sweden has taken many important steps but that we still have many challenges to deal with,” says Åsa Lindhagen.

The report provides an inventory of the extent to which 34 OECD countries

ensure equal treatment of LGBTI people. It compares the situation in 2019 with that in 1999 in all member countries. The OECD concludes that all member countries have been making progress over the last two decades but that they have a long way to go before the rights of LGBTI people are ensured.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Infrastructure

# Government responds to UN human rights recommendations

Published 03 June 2020

The human rights situation in Sweden was reviewed by the UN Human Rights Council at the end of January as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Sweden received 300 recommendations from other UN Member States. The Government has now communicated its position on the recommendations in a report to be submitted to the UN.

The recommendations received by Sweden concerned issues such as strengthening efforts against racism, discrimination and hate crime, establishing a national human rights institute, and strengthening human rights protection for women, children, migrants, the indigenous Sami people, national minorities, people with disabilities and LGBTI people.

- Sweden has come a long way in its human rights work, but we are not done yet. The recommendations we receive from other countries are an important tool in our efforts to be even better, says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen.

In total, 117 countries chose to offer 300 recommendations to Sweden. The Government has chosen to accept approximately two thirds of these, and to comment on the other third.

- We see human rights being challenged in a variety of ways around the world. Sweden and the UN have an important role in continuing to stand up

for the equal value of all people. The work for the full realisation of human rights will continue, says Ms Lindhagen.

The UPR process involves a periodic review of the human rights situation in all UN Member States. Unlike other treaty reviews, the UPR is not conducted by independent experts, but by other States. The UPR is broad-based and covers all of the convention commitments on human rights. This means that all questions relating to human rights can be raised during the review.



Press release from Ministry of Employment

# Government appoints commission for gender-equal lifetime earnings

Published 06 March 2020

The Government has decided to appoint a commission for gender-equal lifetime earnings. The commission has been instructed to present proposals that aim to increase economic equality between women and men in Sweden in the long term.

– Historically, Sweden has made major progress with regard to economic equality. Despite this, we know that women still earn less than men, take a greater share of parental leave, work part-time to a greater extent, take more sick leave and have a lower level of income from capital. There are also gender equality gaps in the distribution of public support measures. This leads to major differences in lifetime earnings between women and men. The Government has therefore decided today to appoint a commission to examine key areas for increasing economic equality. Money is power, and power must be divided equally, says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen.

## Remit

The commission for gender-equal lifetime earnings has been instructed to present proposals that aim to increase economic equality between women and men in the long term. The proposals are to contribute to the overall objective of the gender equality policy – that women and men should have equal power to shape society and their own lives.

The commission is primarily to propose measures that contribute to the promotion of gender-equal wages, gender-equal lifetime earnings, a gender-equal distribution of public support measures as well as gender-equal

workplaces. The proposals presented by the commission must not impact upon the Swedish labour market model and the responsibility of the social partners for wage formation.

In addition to presenting proposals, the commission is to work to ensure a broad discussion in society and spread knowledge about how economic equality and gender-equal lifetime earnings can be promoted. These outreach activities may include publications, conferences and seminars. They may be organised by the commission itself or in cooperation with others, for example government agencies or the social partners.

The commission's final report is to be presented by 20 December 2021. An interim report is to be presented in January 2021.

## Background and the need for a commission

The overall objective of Swedish gender equality policy is equal power for women and men to shape society and their own lives. Subsidiary objective two on economic equality says that women and men must have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to paid work that gives financial independence throughout life.

The subsidiary objective on economic equality has not been achieved due to a number of factors. These include the fact that women work part-time to a greater extent than men, have lower wages and take greater responsibility for unpaid work in the home. In addition, women are absent from work to a greater extent because of parental leave and ill health. The lower levels of income from work lead to lower future pensions for women. The gender-segregated labour market in Sweden contributes to differences in lifetime earnings since professions that are dominated by women often have lower wages than professions that are dominated by men. On average, women's income from capital is also lower than men's.

Most of the circumstances that affect the gender equality of lifetime earnings have previously been the subject of inquiry. The publication of research is ongoing and all in all there is a lot of knowledge. There is now a need for an inquiry to examine and present proposals for measures that are, on the one hand, clearly defined but, on the other, also take aim at several sectors. Overall, a palette of measures targeting several different areas and sectors is needed, which together contribute to the achievement of gender equality policy objectives and the strengthening of women's economic power.

## The commission's members

### Lise Bergh, Chair

Lawyer and Chair of the Board of Trustees of Save the Children Sweden. Has long experience of working with human rights, including as Director of Amnesty International's Swedish section, as a state secretary and an inquiry chair. She has also served as acting Equal Opportunities Ombudsman.

### Mahmood Arai, Member

Professor of Economics. Conducts research into the integration of foreign-born people into Swedish society, gender pay differentials, and decision-making by employment officers and stereotypes linked to physical appearance.

### Sture Nordh, Member

Former President of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees and the Swedish Union of Local Government Officers (currently Vision). Has long experience of inquiries, chaired the cross-party committee of inquiry on public service broadcasting. Has also served as state secretary at the Ministry of Employment.

### Nina Åkestam Wikner, Member

Doctor of Economics and analyst at Google Sverige in the field of advertising effectiveness. Her doctor's thesis was entitled Understanding advertising stereotypes. Is also a published author, most recently with the book *The Feminist Trap*.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Employment, Ministry of Justice

# Protection against honour-related crime to be further strengthened

Published 14 February 2020

In a proposal referred to the Council on Legislation for consideration, the Government proposes that a new child marriage offence be introduced that can result in imprisonment for up to four years. The Government also proposes new grounds for tougher penalties for ‘honour’ crimes and a new instrument, a travel ban, to further strengthen protection against honour-related crime.

“We can never accept that children get married, that people cannot choose for themselves who they will marry, or that people are subjected to violence and oppression in the name of honour. Through these measures, the Government and the parties cooperating with it therefore want to further strengthen protection against honour-related crime,” says Minister for Justice and Migration Morgan Johansson.

“Children in Sweden must not be married, and children must be protected from being removed from the country. End of discussion. We’re now taking a stand for vulnerable children and closing important loopholes in the law. The judicial system must put a stop to custodial parents and other adults restricting the rights of children and young people to live free and secure lives. Children must know that there is protection and support,” says Juno Blom, Secretary-General and child rights policy spokesperson for the Liberal Party.

The new child marriage offence means that it will be punishable to induce or allow a child to enter into marriage or a relationship similar to marriage. Unlike the offence of coercion to marry, this new offence does not require the use of any unlawful coercion or exploitation of the victim’s vulnerable

situation if the offence was committed against a child. The Government also proposes new special grounds for tougher penalties, meaning that the punishment for an offence will be tougher if the motive for the offence was 'honour'.

It is difficult for the Swedish authorities to protect children who have left the country. For this reason, a travel ban will also be introduced to protect children at risk of being taken out of Sweden to be subjected to child marriage or genital mutilation. It will be a punishable offence to take a child out of Sweden in violation of a travel ban. A person who violates a travel ban may be sentenced to imprisonment for up to two years. If a child is subject to a travel ban, the child cannot obtain a passport. If the child already holds a passport, it may be cancelled.

“We can never accept that children and young people become victims of honour-related violence and oppression. Every child who is removed from the country or who lives in fear of being removed from the country is one child too many. This is why the Government is now making it more difficult for anyone wanting to remove children or young people from the country,” says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Employment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice

# UN review of Sweden's human rights compliance

Published 24 January 2020

Sweden's human rights compliance will be reviewed within the framework of the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Monday 27 January in Geneva. Sweden's delegation at the review before the UN Human Rights Council will for the first time be led by a government minister – Åsa Lindhagen, Minister for Gender Equality with responsibility for anti-discrimination and anti-segregation.

“Compliance with the international agreements on human rights is being challenged in a number of ways around the world, including in Sweden. There are considerable challenges regarding human rights, for example for women and LGBTI persons, and the fact that racist movements have become more active in recent years. We look forward to the dialogue, and to the recommendations that we will receive from other countries. They will be important tools in our future efforts at national level,” says Ms Lindhagen.

The UPR process involves a periodic review of the human rights situation in all UN Member States. Unlike other treaty reviews, the UPR is not conducted by independent experts, but by other States. The UPR is broad and covers all of the convention commitments on human rights. This means that all questions relating to human rights can be raised during the review.

In connection with the dialogue, recommendations are provided that the State under review can choose to accept or note (which means that they are not accepted). The most recent review of Sweden took place in January

2015. Sweden received 208 recommendations and accepted 154 of them.

Any questions or interview requests may be addressed to Nicole Goufas,  
Press Secretary to Ms Lindhagen.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Employment

# National report on human rights in Sweden submitted to the UN

Published 15 October 2019

As part of the third cycle of the UN's Universal Periodic Review process (UPR), Sweden has on 14 October submitted a national report to the UN regarding the following up of the recommendations made to Sweden at the most recent review in January 2015.

The UPR process involves a periodic review of the human rights situation in all UN Member States. Unlike normal treaty reviews, the UPR is not conducted by independent experts, but by other States. The UPR is broad and covers all of the convention commitments on human rights. All questions relating to human rights can be raised during the examination.

The review of Sweden as part of this process will take place on 27 January 2020, at a dialogue in the UN's Human Rights Council in Geneva.

“We are living in a time that, more than for a very long time, requires the international agreements on human rights to be respected and taken very seriously. The UPR process is of major importance in promoting human rights, both nationally and internationally,” says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen.

Any questions may be addressed to Nicole Goufas, Press Secretary to Ms Lindhagen.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release

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Published 22 January 2019

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**Government Offices of Sweden**

Press release from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Finance, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Government Offices

# New state secretaries at the Government Offices

Published 22 January 2019

The Government today appointed 31 state secretaries at the Government Offices. Former state secretaries have been dismissed from their positions. Most of the state secretaries have previously held corresponding positions at the Government Offices.

## Prime Minister's Office

The Government has appointed Nils Vikmång as the Prime Minister's State Secretary. The Government has also appointed Madeleine Harby Samuelsson and Karin Wallensteen as state secretaries to Prime Minister Stefan Löfven.

The Government has appointed Paula Carvalho Olovsson as State Secretary to Minister for EU Affairs Hans Dahlgren.

The Government has appointed Mats Andersson and Maria Ferm as state secretaries in the coordinating committee at the Prime Minister's Office.

## Ministry of Employment

The Government has appointed Annika Dahl as State Secretary to Minister for Employment Ylva Johansson.

The Government has appointed Karin Strandås as State Secretary to Minister

for Gender Equality, with responsibility for anti-discrimination and anti-segregation, Åsa Lindhagen.

## Ministry of Finance

The Government has appointed Max Elger and Leif Jacobsson as state secretaries to Minister for Finance Magdalena Andersson.

The Government has appointed Ulf Holm and Elin Olsson as state secretaries to Minister for Financial Markets and Housing, Deputy Minister for Finance, Per Bolund.

The Government has appointed Alejandro Firpo as State Secretary to Minister for Public Administration Ardan Shekarabi.

## Ministry of Defence

The Government has appointed Jan-Olof Lind as State Secretary to Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist.

## Ministry of Infrastructure

The Government has appointed Mattias Landgren as State Secretary to Minister for Infrastructure Tomas Eneroth.

The Government has appointed Sebastian De Toro as State Secretary to Minister for Energy and Digital Development Anders Ygeman.

## Ministry of Justice

The Government has appointed Catharina Espmark and Lars Westbratt as state secretaries to Minister for Justice and Migration Morgan Johansson.

The Government has appointed Elisabeth Backteman as State Secretary to Minister for Home Affairs Mikael Damberg.

## Ministry of Culture

The Government has appointed Helene Öberg as State Secretary to Minister for Culture and Democracy, with responsibility for sport, Amanda Lind.

## Ministry of the Environment

The Government has appointed Eva Svedling and Gunvor Ericson as state secretaries to Minister for Environment and Climate, and Deputy Prime Minister, Isabella Lövin.

## Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation

The Government has appointed Stina Billinger and Emil Högberg as state secretaries to Minister for Enterprise and Innovation Ibrahim Baylan.

The Government has appointed Per Callenberg as State Secretary to Minister for Rural Affairs Jennie Nilsson.

## Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

The Government has appointed Maja Fjaestad as State Secretary to Minister for Health and Social Affairs Lena Hallengren.

## Ministry of Education and Research

The Government has appointed Erik Nilsson as State Secretary to Minister for Education Anna Ekström.

The Government has appointed Malin Cederfeldt Östberg as State Secretary to Minister for Higher Education and Research Matilda Ernkrans.

## Ministry for Foreign Affairs

The Government has appointed Annika Söder as State Secretary for Foreign Affairs to Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström.

The Government has appointed Per Olsson Fridh as State Secretary to Minister for International Development Cooperation Peter Eriksson.

The Government has appointed Niklas Johansson as State Secretary to Minister for Foreign Trade, with responsibility for Nordic affairs, Ann Linde.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Employment

# Åsa Lindhagen speech at UPR

Published 27 January 2020

Geneva, January 27, 2020 Check against delivery

Madam President, excellencies, distinguished members of the UPR working group,

“Can you tell me when something begins? One grain of sand is added to another, and before you know it, you have a heap of sand right in front of your eyes.”

These are the words of Hédi Fried, Swedish Holocaust survivor, child psychologist and tireless educator on antisemitism. Her books are read by many Swedes. They describe how conditions for Jews changed in her hometown – now in present-day Romania – step by step, almost imperceptibly at first.

Millions of men, women and children were brutally murdered in the Holocaust. Today, the 27th of January, is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is an important reminder that human rights can never be taken for granted. The fight for human dignity, and the enjoyment of human rights for all, is our responsibility and we must succeed.

Madam President,

There is a cold wind blowing over the world these days. It challenges our common values, it wants us to value people differently – based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or age. We have felt these winds before.

But rather than bow down, we have learned that our societies are much stronger when we stand up for the equal value of all persons. When we build our societies based on courage, not fear.

But a lot still remains to be done.

To make sure everyone can live in freedom and is afforded respect.

To make sure persons are not marginalised, not exposed to discrimination, hate crime, gender-based violence and honour-related crimes.

It is vital for the wellbeing of many, in particular women, young persons, persons with disabilities, Jews and other minorities. Persons who are exposed to racism and violence on a daily basis.

To tackle these challenges, we need strong and open societies and well-functioning multilateral systems and mechanisms.

We need more cooperation, not less.

The ongoing climate crisis is a threat to life on this planet, to human existence. We must urgently build environmentally sustainable societies to tackle the climate crisis. We are all part of this world, we are all interdependent.

Madam President,

As you all know, the Universal Periodic Review is vital for promoting and upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law around the world.

Safeguarding the rule of law is high on the Swedish Government's agenda. An independent judiciary and a well-functioning and trustworthy justice system are essential foundations of a democratic society.

Sweden is striving for greater transparency on the human rights situation in our country, including through dialogue with civil society organisations.

Their views, and at times criticism, are of great importance to the Swedish Government. We have held several rounds of consultation with civil society organisations prior to this review, and I welcome the presence of Swedish and international civil society organisations here today.

Since the last Universal Periodic Review of Sweden, significant steps have been taken to ensure Sweden's full respect and fulfilment of our international obligations on human rights.

But challenges still remain, and we look forward to discussing them with you

here today.

Your recommendations are highly valuable for our continued national development, and I want to thank you in advance for your contributions.

My delegation includes representatives from several government ministries, reflecting the importance Sweden attaches to this review.

I will now begin by addressing some of the issues raised in advance and highlight some achievements and challenges in our work.

My colleagues from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice will then elaborate on some of the areas.

Madam President,

First of all, I would like to say a few words about our overall human rights policy.

The Government's goal is to ensure Sweden's full respect of our international obligations on human rights.

This was reaffirmed in our national strategy for human rights, which was adopted in 2016 and forms the basis of our systematic work on human rights.

In the last UPR cycle, Sweden accepted recommendations to establish a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles. This is a matter of high priority for the Swedish Government, and significant steps to comply have been taken.

A ministry inquiry was commissioned to propose how a human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles could be modelled. Its report was delivered in October 2018 and circulated for consultation to nearly 200 different bodies. It proposes the establishment of a human rights institution in 2021.

In early 2019, the Prime Minister announced that his Government will establish an independent human rights institution and the matter is now being prepared by the Government Offices.

Secondly, I would like to speak about the importance of respecting the rights of the child.

There is never a second chance to have a happy childhood. The situation for children is sometimes described as a question about the future, but children are important in themselves – here and now, not in some distant future.

The rights of the child must be upheld every day and we, as decision-makers, have an obligation to improve the lives of all children. We also have an obligation to listen to children and make sure that their right to participate and influence is guaranteed.

Last year, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – the most ratified human rights treaty in the world.

Sweden was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention in 1990. It is the cornerstone of Sweden's policy on the rights of the child.

While notable progress has been made in the past three decades, significant challenges still remain, in particular for children in vulnerable situations.

This applies, for example, to children who are at risk of violence, human trafficking or honour-related oppression, or who live in community care.

The Swedish Government will continue to prioritise efforts to combat all forms of violence against children and increased support to children in vulnerable situations.

But despite strategic measures, and the fact that rights of the child have been transformed into applicable Swedish laws and reflected in new legislation, the Convention has not had enough impact on decision-making processes concerning children. Nor have its obligations had enough impact on the activities of central and local government.

Therefore, I am proud to announce that the Convention became Swedish law on the first of January this year. This is a milestone in our national work for the rights of the child.

Incorporation gives the Convention the status of Swedish law, entailing a clearer obligation on courts and legal practitioners to consider the rights contained in the Convention on the rights of the child in deliberations and assessments that are part of decision-making processes in cases and matters concerning children.

If children are to be able to have their rights upheld, it is important that there are systems in place that enable them to assert them. These rights can be

asserted in different ways.

The potential ratification of the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure raises a number of questions which must be analysed before the Government is able to reach a view on the issue.

Madam President,

Thirdly, I would like to address the importance of continued work on effective and comprehensive legislation against discrimination.

Legislative protection against discrimination has been strengthened – for instance regarding accessibility for persons with disabilities – and the budget for anti-discrimination measures has been increased.

An inquiry has been appointed to analyse whether the current provisions regarding supervision of active measures are appropriate for effective compliance with the law.

Not least the #metoo movement shows us that we need to do more.

Madam President,

We also need to fight racism.

Wherever racism exists, and however it is expressed, we must fight it. Racism, xenophobia and prejudice restrict people's lives. They are unacceptable and have no place in a democratic society.

The Swedish Security Service's 2018 Yearbook showed that xenophobic and radical nationalist ideas have increased in society, mainly through social media.

These abhorrent ideas and racist organisations spread hatred towards Jews, Afro-Swedes and Muslims, as well as Sami, Roma, Tornedalers and Swedish Finns.

In our previous UPR dialogue, Sweden received a recommendation to adopt a national action plan against racism. The recommendation was accepted and an integrated, holistic and comprehensive national plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime was subsequently adopted by the Government in 2016. It serves as a foundation for Sweden's work against all

forms and manifestations of racism and hate crime. The plan provides all relevant actors with a common platform and better conditions for working together – so initiatives can be followed up and work developed on a holistic basis.

A range of measures have been implemented and are ongoing. They are being carried out by the Government, and by government agencies on its behalf.

Some examples include:

- racism research grants distributed the Swedish Research Council;
- major educational initiatives on racism, and training for public sector employees, including school staff, police officers and social workers, carried out by the Living History Forum;
- an intensification of measures within the Swedish Police Authority and the judiciary; and
- targeted measures by the Swedish Media Council to empower children and young persons through enhanced knowledge on racism and source criticism.

In addition, since 2018, the Government has provided grants for increased security enhancements for civil society organisations in Sweden. This is because we know that civil society organisations are exposed to racism and hate crime, which can weaken their position and limit their possibilities to raise their voices.

And in the near future, the Government intends to take further action to strengthen the national plan.

Already in the 1980s, Sweden appointed an Ambassador for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. Then in 2016, we also appointed a special envoy for intercultural and interfaith dialogue. The role of the special envoy is to liaise with, and coordinate our participation in, international initiatives to tackle the global human rights challenges posed by racism – including antisemitism and Islamophobia – and protect religious minorities.

Madam President,

On 26–27 October 2020 – twenty years after the Stockholm International

Forum on the Holocaust and the establishment of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance – Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven will host heads of state or government, international organisations, experts, and representatives of academia and civil society at the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism.

The main themes of the Forum will be: Holocaust remembrance, Holocaust education, and antisemitism on social media platforms.

With a firm basis in the history of the Holocaust, the Malmö Forum will seek to strengthen international cooperation for Holocaust remembrance and develop new and improved strategies and measures to combat antisemitism and other forms of racism.

Antisemitism and all forms of racism are threats to us all and to our open and democratic societies. Wherever we see antisemitism, and no matter who expresses it, we must act and – with unwavering resoluteness – expose, confront and combat it. We must do so by protecting and promoting democratic values and respect for human rights. One thing is certain: all forms of racism – antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Gypsyism and Afrophobia to mention a few – are connected. Women, LGBTI persons and persons with disabilities can be particularly vulnerable. We must address antisemitism and all forms of racial discrimination. We can never tolerate it.

Madam President,

I would like to continue by stressing that equal rights and opportunities for LGBTI persons are highly prioritised by the Swedish Government.

Our position is crystal clear: it is not a question of opinion or morals – human rights are universal and apply to all. Everyone must be able to fully enjoy their human rights irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. It is our duty as states to respect, protect and fulfil these rights for all persons, without discrimination of any kind.

In order to strengthen equal rights for transgender persons we are working to pass modern legislation that allows a change of legal gender on the basis of self-determination. We have encountered some challenges in the legislative process, but we are determined to resolve them.

We will also examine how the Parental Code can be made more gender-neutral. This is important for rainbow-families.

Furthermore, The Swedish Migration Agency has been given several assignments and works continuously to ensure the quality in legal processes involving LGBTI identity or expression, and ensure it has the necessary skills to make assessments in such cases. Persons who risk persecution in their country of origin due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, for example, have the right to protection in Sweden. Sweden will always be a strong and important voice to protect the right to seek asylum and vulnerable groups.

The Government is now intensifying its work on LGBTI equality by launching Sweden's first LGBTI action plan, which will be developed during 2020.

Madam President,

Let me continue by proudly stating that the Sweden has a feminist government and a feminist foreign policy.

Gender equality is central to all government ministers, and to all our priorities – in decision-making and resource allocation processes. The overall goal of Sweden's gender equality policy is for women and men to have the same power to shape society and their own lives. Our most important tool for implementing our feminist policy is gender mainstreaming, where gender-responsive budgeting is an essential component.

An important improvement in our gender equality infrastructure was the establishment in January 2018 of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. Its task is to contribute to the effective implementation of gender equality policy.

However, much more still remains to be done. Economic gender equality is one of the Government's priorities. Women and men must have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to paid work, which is important for economic independence throughout life.

A key issue for achieving the equal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work between men and women is providing good conditions for gender-equal parenting. Three reserved months that cannot be transferred between two parents have been introduced, one month at a time, in the parental insurance over a period of time (1995, 2002 and 2016). Evaluations show that the reforms have contributed to a more equal distribution of parental allowance between women and men. It is not only better for women, it is

better for men also, who get a closer bond to their child.

Madam President,

The Government has a policy goal that explicitly states that men's violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys, must have the same right to, and opportunity for, bodily integrity.

This violence is a serious violation of human rights that needs to be addressed within all sectors of society.

In 2016, the Government adopted a ten-year cross-sectoral national strategy for preventing and combating men's violence against women and protecting and supporting women and children subjected to violence.

The policy goal and the strategy cover honour-related violence – a collective oppression including harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriages, despicable practices we must counter effectively and clearly.

Enhanced and effective violence prevention is crucial in this context. An inquiry has also been commissioned to consider the need for a special crime classification pertaining to honour crimes.

We can never accept when people are being denied the right to decide over their own lives and their own bodies.

Madam President,

Four days ago the Swedish Supreme Court decided that it is not the state but the Girjas sameby (Sami village) alone that has the right to decide on issues relating to fishing and small game hunting on the lands that they have used for reindeer herding since time immemorial. The ruling will be analysed and necessary measures will be taken.

In the 2019 Statement of Government Policy, the Prime Minister set out the Government's commitment to strengthening the self-determination and influence of the indigenous Sami people. The Swedish Government intends to continue and step up its work in the area of policy relating to the Sami people.

There are several important processes currently under way to this end. For example, the introduction of a consultation procedure, a Nordic Sami

Convention, and preservation and revitalisation of the Sami languages.

In connection with this, I would also like to mention that the Sami Parliament has made a request for a Truth Commission and the Tornedaler national minority has made a request for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Swedish Government intends to fulfil both of these requests. Dialogue about the continued process is ongoing.

Madam President,

On the subject of national minorities, I would also like to emphasise that the Government is working for the continued empowerment of national minorities. Ensuring the rights of national minorities, including their full enjoyment of human rights, is a priority that has a particular focus on culture and languages.

The Swedish Government has strengthened legislation to support all our national minorities. One important improvement is the requirement for all municipalities and regions to adopt goals and guidelines for their work on minority policy, of which language and culture should be a key part. A central task for stakeholders working with national minorities is creating conditions that promote the transfer of language and culture from one generation to the next.

Madam President,

Everyone has the right to live their life in freedom and dignity. Despite progress in recent decades, persons with disabilities still tend to be forgotten or overlooked. This is unacceptable. Our societies should be judged on how we treat those who are most vulnerable. Let me therefore also reaffirm that the Swedish Government will continue its work for an effective, systematic and sustainable disability policy.

In 2008, Sweden ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. And in 2017, we adopted a new national goal for disability policy that uses the Convention as a starting point. A lot of work will be needed in the years ahead, and the Swedish Agency for Participation has the mission to make sure that disability policy has an impact in society. It monitors development, develops methods and guidelines, initiates research, disseminates knowledge and proposes measures to the Government. It is thus one of the Government's most important tools for the implementation of disability policy.

The Government has initiated several processes to strengthen the rights of persons who require personal assistance. But challenges and obstacles still remain, and a lot of work will be needed in the years ahead.

Madam President,

Let me conclude by saying that we are facing uncertain times. Around the world, there is growing pushback against human rights. It is no longer enough to promote human rights – sadly, we must also defend what has already been accomplished. Our message is clear: Sweden is determined to promote and protect human rights – to push back the pushback!

But before I finish, let me say that our work on achieving full respect for human rights in Sweden is far from over, but we will continue working tirelessly to achieve it.

I want to thank you for your attention, and for giving us this opportunity to address the Council. We look forward to hearing the recommendations from the distinguished delegates here today and to participating in the coming dialogue.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Employment

# Speech by Åsa Lindhagen at the UN Commission on the Status of Women

Published 13 March 2019

New York, March 12, 2019. Check against delivery.

Madame/Mr Chair,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sweden aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. I am honored to lead Sweden's delegation, as a member of a feminist government, and happy that the Swedish delegation includes a variety of expertise from the civil society in Sweden.

Gender equality is a fundamental matter of human rights, democracy and social justice. Women and men must have the same power to shape society and their own lives.

We stand up for the equal rights of all LGBTI-persons. All persons are of equal value, and must be able to enjoy all human rights and share the same responsibilities and opportunities, regardless of sex, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.

Madame/Mr Chair,

Sweden welcomes the UN Secretary General's report on the need for well-designed and integrated social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure that can advance gender equality.

The pursuit for gender equality has been a guiding principle in developing the Swedish welfare state. Individual taxation, child care and the right to

paid parental leave, combined with access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, are key reforms in improving women's earnings, well-being and the equality at home.

But still, even with significant progress, gender gaps remain in Sweden. Women earn lower wages and take a greater responsibility for the unpaid work at home. Women are physically and sexually abused also in my country. We have not completed our work in Sweden. We have a lot more to do.

Madame/Mr Chair,

Around the world, democracy is in decline. Journalists, elected representatives and human rights defenders are being harassed, persecuted and even killed. Women are being suppressed and their human rights neglected. Civil society organizations representing LGBTI-rights, are under attack. This is a threat to democracy and unacceptable.

In response to this, Sweden is now launching a drive for democracy. Fully functioning democracy is impossible without the promotion and protection of human rights. All states have an unquestionable responsibility to fulfill these rights. Sweden is committed to this.

An important part of our democracy drive is to continue pursuing a feminist foreign policy.

We will continue our extensive support to sexual and reproductive health and rights. For example, Sweden is funding initiatives for contraceptives, safe and legal abortions and comprehensive sexuality education. We will work against trafficking in human beings and share our experience of the Swedish Sexual Purchases Act, which prohibits the purchase of sexual services.

We will share information on our new sexual offence legislation based on consent and the obvious notion that if sex is not voluntary it is illegal. Stopping men's violence against women is a priority for my government. We are also happy that the Forum on Gender Equality held in Stockholm last year, will be followed up in Tunis in April this year.

Madame/Mr Chair,

Our times are troubling times. There is a cold wind blowing over parts of the world. Destructive forces are pushing to roll back many land-winnings on

gender equality. Climate change is threatening our civilization and the rights for women and girls. New voices are being raised questioning the importance of gender equality.

Therefore, it is urgent and utterly important that we stand up for the equal value of all people and for the rights of women and girls. In these times it is no longer enough to push gender equality forward, we must now also defend what has already been accomplished. The message from Sweden is clear: gender equality must move forward, not be rolled back.

Thank you.