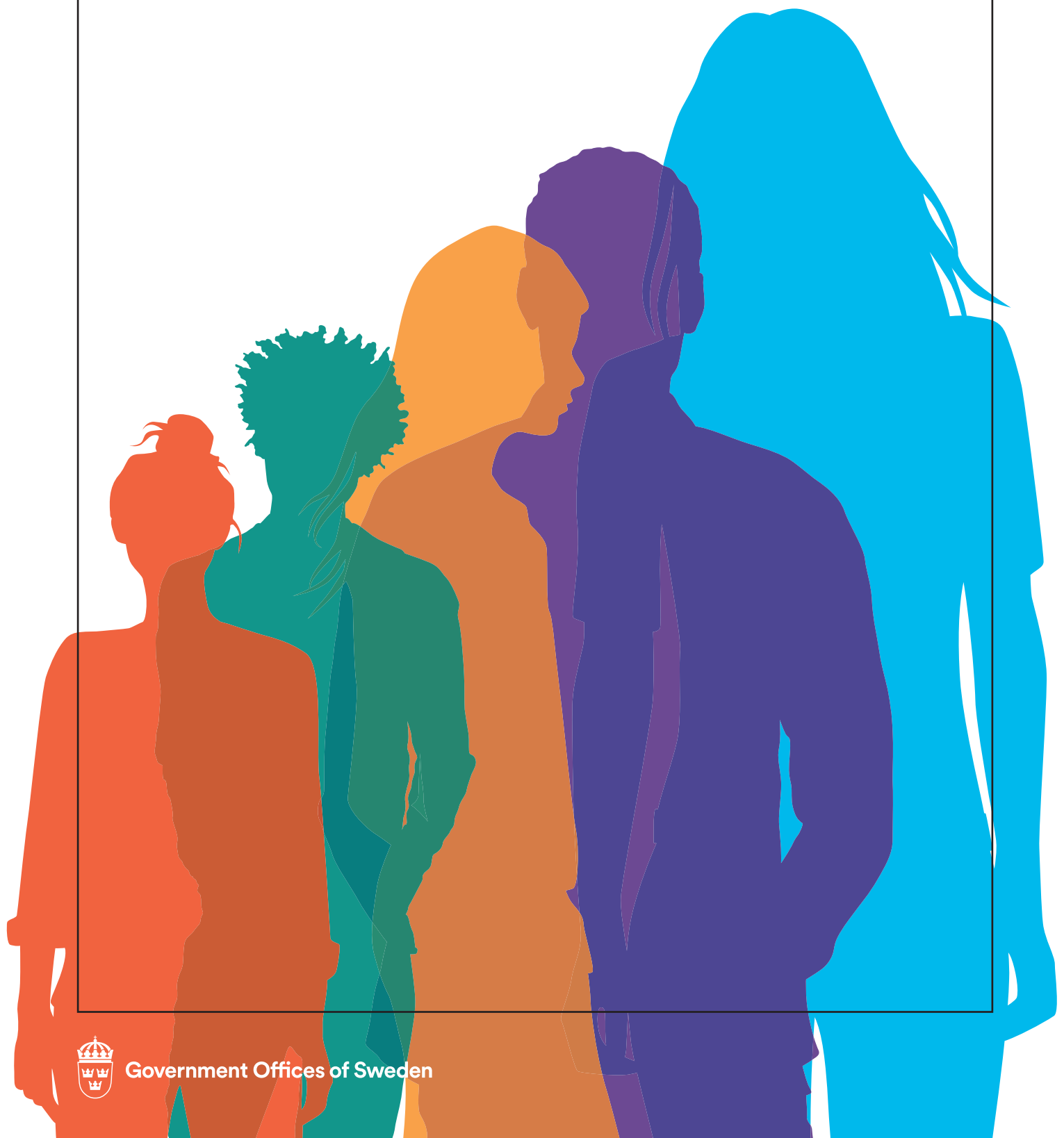


Action Plan to combat racism and hate crime





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Foreword

The right to equality, to non-discrimination and the freedom to shape one's own destiny are fundamental pillars of Swedish society. Every person has the right to be treated and dealt with based on who they are as a person and their actions – not on their ethnic background or because of their religion or belief. In an equal society, the important thing is not what your name is or where you come from, but what you do and where you are heading with your life.

Racism and discrimination violate this basic standpoint. They are degrading and limiting for the individuals affected, as they pit groups against each other, and they are divisive and destructive for society in general.

We also regularly see global events having repercussions in Sweden and feeding various forms of racism and polarisation. This can involve gross abuses in the form of hatred and threats of violence. It can also involve discrimination or bullying and harassment that affects children and young people as well as adults in the course of their everyday lives. It is crucial that government agencies and other public actors treat and deal with people in an equal way – it is about safeguarding legal certainty for the individual as well as trust in our democratic institutions.

With this Action Plan, the Swedish Government is taking important steps forward in its work to safeguard equal rights and opportunities for all by intensifying efforts to make Sweden a country free from racism and hate crime.

The Government has based this Action Plan on the current, cumulative state of knowledge about racism. It is apparent that to be successful in these efforts requires clear objectives and systematic and persistent efforts. It requires robust and sustainable structures. This Action Plan lays the foundations for just such well-targeted and long-term work. That is why this Action Plan includes concerted action in four areas – Schools, the Judicial system, the Welfare system, and Working life – with clear sub-objectives for each of these areas. It provides a clear direction for the work, as well as the basis for monitoring progress.

Some groups in society such as Afro-Swedes, Jews, Muslims, Roma and Sami are particularly vulnerable to racism and hate crimes. In some respects,

there are similarities in the ways in which these groups are targeted. But there are also important differences for historical and structural reasons. Effective work to combat racism requires generalised efforts while also identifying and responding to the particular features of the racism that targets specific groups.

Our society is bigger than just the state. Civil society representatives have played an important role in identifying the challenges and needs for measures to combat racism and hate crime, and have thus made important contributions to this Action Plan. The knowledge and experience that civil society organisations have will continue to be valuable inputs for the implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan.

It is our shared responsibility to ensure that everyone can feel safe in expressing their identity – regardless of context, and at all stages throughout life. The public sector has a particular responsibility to combat racism and discrimination, and to work for equal rights and opportunities for all people. But as individuals and as a society, we also have a shared responsibility to contribute to this work. This Action Plan is intended to provide direction and practical support in this important work.

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1. Background and starting points

The right to equal treatment and the freedom to shape one's own destiny are fundamental pillars of Swedish society. Every person has the right to be treated and dealt with based on who they are as a person and their actions.

Work in recent years based on the National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime (Ku2016/02629/DISK) has contributed more knowledge about how racism continues to pose a challenge in many sectors of society. Racism can be expressed as hate crimes where verbal attacks, threats or violence create fear in people's everyday lives, on the Internet, in public debate and in other parts of society; and as discrimination that limits people's opportunities in the labour market or in education, for example, or as bullying and harassment that affects children and young people in schools. Racism and discrimination are harmful to the individuals victimised, but also to society as a whole. Racism and discrimination contribute to polarisation, and to limiting people's opportunities to contribute to society in general. Although many efforts have been made to prevent and combat racism, the need for further concerted and conscious efforts remains.

The National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime was adopted in 2016. In June 2022, the Government decided on five action programmes to combat different forms of racism – Afrophobia, antisemitism, antigypsyism, Islamophobia, and racism against Sami – as a complement to the National plan. For the period 2022–2024, these action programmes aimed to help increase awareness of and combat these specific forms of racism. Final reports on the actions in these programmes will be submitted in March 2025.

In June 2023, the Swedish Agency for Public Management presented an analysis of the National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime (A2023/01101). Through dialogues with relevant government agencies and with contributions from civil society, the Swedish Agency for Public Management has analysed and assessed how well the structure that the plan set for these efforts has functioned to support its objective of working more strategically, effectively and coherently to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime. This analysis showed that the plan did add value, but also that the structure for these efforts needs development. For example, there is a need for more concrete, clear

objectives describing what these efforts should lead to, and better conditions for the government agencies to attain these objectives so that this work will produce results. As part of its task, the Swedish Agency for Public Management also submitted a number of recommendations on how this work could have a greater impact at the local level.

Efforts to combat various forms of racism have been strengthened within the European Union (EU) in recent years. Sweden is actively involved in this work, and as President of the Council of the European Union during spring 2023, Sweden helped to strengthen the conditions for long-term work to combat racism and antisemitism. The EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2022–2025, and the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life 2021–2030 have been in the process of implementation for some years.

When work to develop this Action Plan began in autumn 2023, there was already a lot of knowledge and experiences from previous initiatives in this area that has generated reports on how different forms of racism are manifested in hate crime and discrimination, for example. Data on the incidence of racism is important for making its impact on individuals visible, but also to highlight when there are other circumstances that contribute to experiences of racism, or when the term is used to serve other purposes.

Since 2016, dialogues on people's exposure to various forms of racism and the need for measures have been conducted regularly with civil society. In December 2023, a focused discussion (*sakeråd*) on national efforts against racism was organised, involving some 20 civil society organisations. The purpose of this gathering was to get a picture from civil society organisations of what is important to preserve – and what is missing – in the current work; which sectors of society and what actions should be prioritised; and how the perspective of children and young people could be enhanced in future work. A consultation was also held with the Sami Parliament in accordance with the Sami Consultation Act (2022:66). Reports and reviews from international human rights monitoring bodies have also provided important inputs to the work on this Action Plan.

2. Direction of the Action Plan

2.1 Structure

Following on from the description of the background and main starting points for the Action Plan, this section sets out its direction and objectives. It also includes a description of how the Government uses the most central terms in the Action Plan, how different forms of exposure to racism and discrimination are expressed by victims, and how the content of the Action Plan relates to the situation of children and adolescents.

The third section is a review of key structures in the work against racism and hate crime, nationally and internationally. The fourth section presents a status report on the incidence of racism and hate crime in Sweden based on a wide selection of national and international sources, as well as what has emerged in dialogues with civil society.

The fifth section contains the Government's measures within the framework of the Action Plan based on identified needs and the work currently being done. The sixth and final section contains a brief description of how the Action Plan will be monitored and evaluated.

2.2 Objectives and sub-objectives

The overarching objective of this Action Plan is a *society free from racism*.

The various ways in which racism is expressed present challenges throughout society and require efforts from a variety of actors in a large number of sectors. However, it is also important that efforts implemented produce results. Society's resources should be focused where they have the most impact in relation to the needs expressed by those exposed to racism, and based on what has the best prospects of making a difference. These efforts should create the basis for the knowledge produced to be utilised in practice by relevant actors. The Action Plan should therefore help to make the work against racism and hate crime better targeted and easier to evaluate, and for it to have a long-term focus.

To achieve such results, the work in the Action Plan is primarily carried out in four focus areas: Schools, the Judicial system, the Welfare system and public sector activities, and Working life. Each of these areas is linked to a sub-objective which will be used to monitor progress in the work. Focusing

on these areas does not prevent important initiatives being carried out in other parts of society.

The Action Plan is primarily intended to provide a structure for Sweden's work against racism and hate crime at the national level, but also to contribute to this work at the local and regional level, for example by creating the conditions for the knowledge and tools produced to reach municipal and regional activities and be utilised in practice.

The challenges in the area of racism that society faces often have their origins in developments that occurred a long time ago, and which require persistent efforts moving forward. Therefore, this Action Plan is intended to lay the foundations for a long-term project. For each focus area, a number of government agencies are identified that are considered to be particularly important for achieving the sub-objective. These government agencies are important because they either help to produce relevant new knowledge, or because they contribute to preventing and combating racism and hate crime through other initiatives.

Specifically identified government agencies:

The Swedish Work Environment Authority, Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, Swedish Equality Ombudsman, Living History Forum, Swedish Police Authority, Swedish National Agency for Education, and National Board of Health and Welfare.

Other government agencies involved in the implementation of the Action Plan are:

the Swedish Crime Victim Authority, County Administrative Boards, Swedish Agency for the Media, Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise, Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities, Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, University of Gothenburg (The Segerstedt Institute), Swedish School Inspectorate, Swedish Defence Research Institute, Swedish Research Council and Swedish Prosecution Authority.

2.3 Coordination

A function for coordinating and monitoring the work under the Action Plan is needed to assist in the work being done in a concerted way that has in view the identified objectives, and to ensure that the actors involved are kept informed about what is being done, and the results as well as needs for fine-tuning are noted.

The Living History Forum has been tasked with coordinating and monitoring the work done under the Action Plan. The task includes regular sharing of experiences, knowledge and data, primarily between government agencies; and creating the conditions for cooperation on relevant issues concerning racism and hate crime. In the context of work with the previous National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime, The Living History Forum established a broad network of government agencies that work with these issues, and a reference group consisting of representatives from civil society organisations. In addition, The Living History Forum is to monitor the work done under the Action Plan through dialogue with the government agencies mentioned above. More detailed descriptions of these government agencies' work and how it is monitored can be found in Sections 5 and 6, respectively.

2.4 Generalised and specific expressions of racism, terms and perspectives

A coordinated approach with targeted efforts

The direction for this Action Plan is the broad and coordinated implementation of efforts to combat racism and hate crime. At the same time, it is important to have a particular focus on different forms of racism in order to capture the exposure of different groups and to better target initiatives. No matter who it targets, and who it comes from, racism and similar forms of hostility are never acceptable.

Generalised efforts to combat racism need to be supplemented with targeted efforts that make visible and counter specific forms of racism. Based on the existing data on the incidence of racism in Sweden today, the Action Plan has a particular focus on anti-Muslim racism, antisemitism, anti-Black racism, antigypsyism and racism against Sami people. All these forms of racism have an impact on people's living conditions, but they originate in different historical processes, which in turn affects how they are expressed in

Sweden today, and in some cases how they should be combated. Although the Action Plan has a particular focus on the above-mentioned forms of racism, it should contribute to combating all forms of racism, including racism that affects other groups in society.

That there are both similarities and differences between these forms of racism became apparent in the dialogues with civil society that were carried out as part of the work to develop the action programmes targeting different forms of racism that were adopted in 2022. Many of the representatives from civil society highlighted the need for more knowledge about the current manifestations of each form of racism, and of different strategies to combat them. They also identified certain activities, such as activities within the judicial system and the school system, as particularly important in this work, regardless of the form of racism involved. Furthermore, that work to prevent and combat different forms of racism may need coordination is also in line with what many government agencies and other relevant activities want: that the Government's steering of cross-sectoral issues ought to be coordinated in order to facilitate the implementation of initiatives.

The action programmes to combat Afrophobia, antisemitism, antigypsyism, Islamophobia and racism against Sami, which include actions for the period 2022–2024, aim to raise awareness of and combat these forms of racism. The need for awareness-raising and other efforts to combat different specific forms of racism remain. The most appropriate way to support coherent and clear governance in the area while keeping the focus on achieving the set objectives is an Action Plan that takes a holistic approach to the work and also makes visible the various forms of racism and the specific challenges, needs and actions that are linked to them. The action programmes are now being integrated into this Action Plan. The Action Plan thus provides the basis for a concerted effort to continue this targeted work against various forms of racism. This work goes hand in hand with the Government's integration policy objective.

Terms

The term 'racism' as used in this Action Plan refers to notions that people are essentially different from each other due to assumptions about race and national, cultural or ethnic origin, religion, skin colour or other similar circumstance, and that therefore they can or should be treated in different ways. This is largely expressed in hierarchical notions of allegedly superior

and inferior people, but may also be expressed in conceptions that certain groups of people are prone to particularly reprehensible personality traits, that they exercise power behind the scenes, or are a generally destructive force in society.

Racism can lead to actions such as hate crime or discrimination. Throughout history, and to a greater extent than is the case today, racism has often been based on pseudo-scientific notions of biology. However, a racial biology view still exists in various extremist environments, for example in the violent right-wing extremism, so called 'white-power' environment.

Racism is expressed in different ways in society. The most obvious form is when a person deliberately and explicitly expresses racism in words or actions in some context. But racism can also be expressed unconsciously, for example as a consequence of various prejudices that exist in the society, which have often existed for a long time. This form of racism is often referred to as structural racism. Conscious or unconscious notions about a person belonging to a certain group can result in people not having equal access to rights and opportunities in life.

Hate crime is a collective term for the offences *agitation against a population group* and *unlawful discrimination*, as well as other offences where a motive for the offence was to insult a person or a population group on grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity or expression, or another similar circumstance.

This Action Plan's perspective on racism is comprehensive and, as mentioned above, it covers all forms of racism while also paying particular attention to specific forms of racism: anti-Muslim racism, antisemitism, anti-Black racism, antigypsyism and racism against Sami people. These forms of racism have different origins and are expressed in somewhat different ways. Although these terms are relatively well-established today and are used in many contexts, they are regularly debated, as are their definitions, in research studies and in society at large. The meanings of these terms in this Action Plan are given below, along with examples of how different forms of racism may be manifested based on how these terms are used and discussed in the research community. Section 4.3 provides a more detailed account of what we know about the prevalence of these forms of racism in Sweden today based on various research studies, reports and other inputs.

Anti-Muslim racism is a form of racism directed at Muslims and people who are perceived to be Muslims, for example due to their attire or their name. In this Action Plan, the term is equivalent to the term *Islamophobia*, which was used in the previous National plan to combat racism, etc., and which also figures in other contexts. In work within the EU and the Council of Europe, the terms anti-Muslim hatred, anti-Muslim discrimination, and anti-Muslim racism and discrimination are often used. The term Islamophobia has been criticised because ‘phobia’ brings to mind individuals’ irrational fears rather than discrimination, exclusion and racism, and has also been called into question for giving the impression that it only concerns views on Islam as a religion rather than Muslims.

It can be difficult to draw sharp boundaries between what is hostility towards a religion and what is hostility towards people associated with that religion. Negative ideas about Islam and Muslims have arisen throughout history, including in Christian countries during the Middle Ages. To some extent, anti-Muslim racism today is a continuation of these historical notions. In recent times and in several parts of the world, negative attitudes towards Muslims have often surged following dramatic events such as the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001. When the term ‘anti-Muslim racism’ is used in this Action Plan, it does not refer to criticism of the religion, but to hostility directed at people because they are, or are assumed to be, Muslims.

Muslims today are often seen as a homogeneous group, regardless of their individual views on culture and religion. Anti-Muslim movements affect Muslims whether they are practising Muslims or not. For example, Muslims and other people from the Middle East and North Africa in particular are subjected to the prejudices of others in digital environments. Visibility in the form of clothing that is perceived to be religious contributes to women who wear a headscarf experiencing anti-Muslim racism as part of their everyday lives, for example. Anti-Muslim hate crimes often include molestation, which usually occurs in a public place or near the victim’s home.

Antisemitism is a collective term for prejudice and hostility towards Jews. It concerns in part stereotypical notions and myths, and in part a negative attitude towards Jews as a group.

Sweden stands behind the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's non-legally binding, working definition of antisemitism, and the list of examples that can serve as a guide, depending on the context. According to this definition, antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Verbal and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed towards Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, and towards Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. The definition also includes examples of what can be classified as antisemitism, such as drawing comparisons between contemporary Israeli policy and that of the Nazis or holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

Various negative attributes have been ascribed to Jews throughout history. Antisemitism can take different forms and vary in intensity. It can appear as attitudes and mindsets, but also as theology and ideology. Antisemitism has roots that are centuries old and cannot be interpreted or understood without putting it into its historical context. The antisemitic tradition revolves around a large number of notions, myths and allegations, including that there is a supposed global Jewish conspiracy or power elite, an idea that is not a main feature of racism in general. In many instances, these have morphed over time, been given new justifications, and adapted to new circumstances – although they have basically always followed similar patterns of thought. During the Middle Ages, for example, Jews were attacked by the Christian church, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, antisemitic conspiracy theories about the Jews being behind the virus were widespread, not least on the Internet. In the 20th century, the Nazis saw the Jews as a threat to the survival of the 'Aryan race'. The Holocaust – the genocide of over six million Jews during World War II – is the most extreme manifestation of antisemitism. Denial or distortion of the Holocaust is also a form of antisemitism. Because of the peculiarities of antisemitism, it is sometimes not addressed in the context of general efforts against racism. Antisemitism is also sometimes rendered invisible based on notions that Jews are 'white' or 'prosperous' and therefore cannot be victims of racism.

Hatred of Jews is a central element of extreme Islamist ideology and propaganda within the neo-Nazi white-power movement and in parts of the left-wing extremist movement. Global events tend to trigger antisemitism and violence against Jews and Jewish targets. Since Hamas's terrorist attack in Israel on 7 October 2023, for example, the number of attacks on Jews and

Jewish institutions has increased and antisemitic slogans have been used in demonstrations in Sweden and Europe. Experiences of hate crime and other manifestations of antisemitism are a recurring element in the lives of many Jews and can occur at school, in the workplace, in public places and online.

Anti-Black racism is a form of racism directed at Africans and people of African descent. In this Action Plan, the term is equivalent to the term *Afrophobia*, which was used in the previous National plan to combat racism, etc., and which also figures in other contexts. The EU and the Council of Europe often use the terms *racism* or *discrimination against black persons* or *against people of African descent* in their work. The term *Afrophobia* has been contested because the suffix ‘phobia’ brings to mind individuals’ irrational fears rather than discrimination, exclusion and racism.

Racism against people of African descent has existed for a long time in Sweden. Research studies suggests that anti-Black racism is based on racist notions and ideas that are rooted in colonial history and supported by pseudo-scientific racial biology ideas where Africans and people of African descent are seen and treated as inferior.

Socially constructed notions of ‘racial traits’ and the existence of a hierarchy of ‘races’ are central to anti-Black racism today. Prejudices based on such notions, and that therefore people should be treated differently, still exist today and have resulted in Afro-Swedes receiving incorrect medical treatment within the health care system, among other things. As a visible minority because of their skin colour, Afro-Swedes run the risk of racism affecting all areas of their lives. The risk of being subjected to anti-Black racism exists in much of society and there are few places where Afro-Swedes do not run the risk of being subjected to hate crime. Hate crime against Afro-Swedes is also characterised by a high incidence of violence.

Antigypsyism is a form of racism directed at Roma, or people perceived to be Roma, and has a centuries-old history in Europe. Many Roma still bear witness to discrimination, oppression and contempt being part of their everyday lives.

Sweden stands behind the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s non-legally binding, working definition of antigypsyism, and the list of examples that can serve as a guide, depending on the context. According to this definition, antigypsyism is a manifestation of individual expressions and

acts as well as institutional policies and practices of marginalisation, exclusion, physical violence, devaluation of Roma cultures and lifestyles, and hate speech directed at Roma as well as other individuals and groups perceived, stigmatised, or persecuted as ‘Gypsies’. This leads to Roma being treated as an alien group and being associated with an array of derogatory stereotypes and distorted images of them that constitute a particular form of racism.

Research studies and central government inquiries concur that, throughout history, Roma have been driven away from their settlements, subjected to forced sterilisation and systematic mappings and registrations, had their children taken away from them and placed in municipal or state care, and denied the freedom to express their Roma identity. Antigypsyism was a fundamental aspect of the genocide of Roma – the policy of persecution and extermination of Roma pursued by Nazi Germany. This still has an impact on the living conditions of Roma people to this day.

Racism and discrimination against Roma today occurs in much of their lives, including when looking for work or housing, in working life or in the education system, or in interactions with the health care system. This discrimination is often experienced in their daily lives as well, for example in shops or restaurants, or in interactions with various public sector activities. Manifesting one’s Roma identity, for example through traditional attire, can make them particularly vulnerable to racism. While Roma often express pride in their Roma identity, many feel insecure about expressing it, and avoid talking about being Roma.

Racism against Sami affects people who are or are assumed to be Sami, and has been present in Sweden for a long time. The policies that the Swedish state pursued in the past and their consequences, such as forced assimilation, segregation and forced displacement, affect the living conditions of the Sami even to this day. According to some research studies, the racism that Sami are exposed to may have links to racist notions originating from the ideas of racial biology and can be traced back to the expansion of the Swedish state’s claims on northern Sweden, which began as early as in the Middle Ages.

Racism against Sami can also stem from prejudice and ignorance of Sami history and culture. It can manifest in Sami being subjected to degrading treatment, derogatory racist comments, or discrimination. The risk of being

subjected to racism and hate crime can lead some Sami to choose to hide their Sami identity.

Racism against Sami can also be expressed in acts targeting reindeer, as reindeer are often seen as closely connected with Sami culture. For example, reindeer are deliberately stirred up, run over by snow scooters, or shot dead as manifestations of hatred targeting Sami. In addition to offences involving reindeer, people working in the reindeer industry are targeted with threats and various forms of criminal damage. Sami who express their Sami identity openly, reindeer herding Sami, and those with Sami names are those who are most vulnerable to racism and hate crime.

Various forms of vulnerability to racism and discrimination

A person's vulnerability to racism and discrimination is often affected by a number of grounds of discrimination, as well as other aspects of a person's identity, which influence and sometimes reinforce each other. In the EU Anti-racism Action Plan, the European Commission emphasises that using an intersectional approach to draw attention to how racism can be combined with discrimination and hatred related to religion, sex, sexual orientation, age and disability for example, or target migrants, can lead to more effective measures.

In gender equality policy, a similar approach is used to highlight gender differences within certain groups or that different groups of women and men experience differences in the way they are treated. Taking gender equality into account is important in all aspects of the work against racism and hate crime.

The report *The state of discrimination 2023* (Equality Ombudsman) shows that discrimination based on different grounds of discrimination is additive and heightens vulnerability – in specific situations, and over a longer period of time or a whole lifetime. This may concern exposure to racism and harassment that can be related to both ethnicity and religion, religion and sex, or ethnicity and disability.

Children and young people

The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden's 2021 report *Om barns och ungas utsatthet för rasism* (On children's and young people's exposure to racism) shows how racism is part of children's everyday lives from an early age and

is expressed in many different ways and a variety of contexts, especially in schools and on the Internet. Children are rendered invisible, treated with suspicion, and subjected to verbal harassment, threats and violence by both other children and adults. The report also shows how, for example, socio-economic vulnerability intersects with vulnerability to racism.

It is important to pay particular attention to the vulnerability of children and young people to racism and discrimination, especially in view of the risk of it greatly affecting their conditions and opportunities in school and in life in general. Likewise, childhood and adolescence are when the individual starts to shape their values and reflect on them. Work to prevent racism therefore needs to include a child-rights and adolescent perspective, where children and young people are also included in decision-making or change processes that affect them.

Listening to children and young people and taking their experiences and views into account in actions that affect them is not only an obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is now Swedish law, but also key to formulating accurately targeted initiatives against racism. It is also important that children and young people know their rights and where they can get help if they are subjected to racism and discrimination, just as adults working in activities that deal with children and young people should be aware of their obligations.

3. Structures in the work against racism and hate crime

This section describes the most central aspects of the work against racism and hate crime in different policy areas nationally, as well as the structures for this work internationally. It covers legislation, policy objectives, the tasks of government agencies and various forms of policy work at the national level, as well as international convention obligations, monitoring mechanisms, and regional intergovernmental cooperation.

3.1 National

Work against discrimination

An important tool in Sweden's national work against racism is the Discrimination Act (2008:567), whose purpose is to combat discrimination and in other ways promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.

Provisions protecting against discrimination are also included in the Swedish Constitution. According to Article 2 of the Instrument of Government, one of the fundamental laws that make up the Swedish Constitution, public power shall be exercised with respect for the equal worth of all and the liberty and dignity of the individual. Furthermore, this Article states that public institutions shall work to promote the opportunity for all to attain participation and equality in society and for the rights of the child to be safeguarded, and that public institutions shall combat discrimination of persons on grounds of gender, colour, national or ethnic origin, linguistic or religious affiliation, disability, sexual orientation, age or other circumstance affecting the individual.

The aim of discrimination policy is a society free from discrimination. Work to combat discrimination and discriminatory structures requires a number of different measures at different levels. The Equality Ombudsman monitors compliance with the Discrimination Act and must work to ensure that the forms of discrimination set out in the Act do not occur in any areas of society. According to the Act concerning the Equality Ombudsman (2008:568), the Equality Ombudsman shall also work in other respects to promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of ethnicity, religion or other belief, for example. In the period 2024–2026, the Equality Ombudsman is prioritising work to prevent and combat racism and

discrimination related to ethnicity, religion or other belief. Areas that will be covered by this priority include discrimination in schools and discrimination against indigenous people and national minorities.

Effective work against racism and hate crime supports efforts to attain the objective of a society free from discrimination. Preventing and combating racism also helps counter the risk of people being disadvantaged by being treated worse than others due to their ethnicity and religion, for example, when applying for a job or a place at an educational institution.

Human rights policy at the national level

The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, better known as the European Convention on Human Rights or ECHR, applies as law in Sweden. Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights prohibits discrimination. It stipulates that the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child also applies as a law in Sweden. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

Under international law, Sweden's obligations under the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and other conventions related to human rights and freedoms are also binding on Sweden when it formulates its human rights policy at the national level (see also Section 3.2 International aspects).

The objective of Sweden's human rights policy is to ensure full respect for the country's international human rights obligations. The objective is cross-sectoral and is to permeate all policy. Work in this area is based on the Strategy on the national implementation of human rights (Govt Comm.

2016/17:29). The essence of the strategy is that compliance with Sweden's international obligations on human rights cannot be taken for granted, in either the short or the long term. Instead, steps must continue to be taken towards a cohesive structure to promote and protect human rights.

One of the tasks of the Swedish Institute for Human Rights (IMR) is to monitor, inquire into and report on respect for human rights and how it is being achieved in Sweden. Under the Act on the Institute for Human Rights (2021:642), IMR is also required to submit proposals to the Government on the measures needed to assure respect for human rights and to promote education, research, skills development, information and greater awareness of human rights. IMR must also perform the tasks of an independent national mechanism under Article 33(2) of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Furthermore, each year the IMR must submit a report to the Government on its activities and observations of developments in the area of human rights.

National minorities and the indigenous Sami people

The five recognised national minorities in Sweden are Jews, Roma, Sámi, Sweden Finns, and Tornedalians. The Sami are also recognised as indigenous people in Sweden. The minority languages are Finnish, Yiddish, Meankieli, Romani chib, and the Sami languages. Work for Sweden's national minorities is based on the Act on National Minorities and Minority Languages (2009:724) – the Minorities Act. Since 2019, all municipalities and regions in Sweden have been required by that Act to adopt objectives and guidelines for their work on the rights of the national minorities.

The objective of minorities policy is to protect the national minorities, enhance their opportunities to exert influence, and help keep long-established minority languages alive. The achievement of this objective is to be monitored in three areas: discrimination and exposure, influence and participation, and language and cultural identity. The Stockholm County Administrative Board and the Sami Parliament are tasked with monitoring compliance with the Act. *En samordnad och långsiktig strategi för romsk inkludering* (Govt Comm. 2011/12:56) (A coordinated, long-term strategy for Roma inclusion) was adopted in 2012. The goal of the strategy is that a Roma person who turns 20 in 2032 will enjoy the same opportunities in life as a non-Roma person. Measures to increase knowledge about the national

minorities in the wider society can help prevent antisemitism, antigypsyism and racism against Sami by countering prejudices and stereotypes.

Hate crime

The aim of Sweden's hate crime legislation is to give persons or groups special protection against acts targeting them on the grounds of their ethnic origin or religion, for example. Hate crime is a collective name for the offences agitation against a population group and unlawful discrimination as well as the special ground for tougher penalties in Chapter 29, Section 2, point 7, the Swedish Criminal Code. The latter provision means that if a motive for the offence was to insult a person or a population group on grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity or expression, or another similar circumstance, it must be deemed an aggravating circumstance when assessing the penalty value of each specific type of offence.

The Swedish Police Authority's remit includes fighting hate crime and other offences that threaten democracy. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) is responsible for producing information on hate crime annually using statistics on hate crimes reported to the police, and specialised studies on hate crime.

Work to combat violent extremism

Violent extremism can be a manifestation of racism, in which case the general provisions apply that govern criminal offences such as assault, making an unlawful threat and agitation against a population group or other offences against public order or against individuals (see above). Work in this area is based on the National strategy against violent extremism and terrorism (Govt Comm. 2023/24:56). That strategy is divided into four areas: Prevent, Avert, Protect, and Manage. These areas cover the actors in society who work to prevent crime linked to violent extremism and terrorism, and if such offences do occur, to enable management of their consequences.

Integration policy

The objective of integration policy is that foreign-born women and men should have the same obligations, rights and opportunities as the rest of the population to live a free, dignified and independent life in society. This assumes that those who stay in Sweden for a long time take responsibility for

becoming part of Swedish society, and that society should both impose requirements and provide opportunities for integration. Integration policy is intended to contribute to social and cultural, economic, linguistic and democratic integration and, through education, improve the conditions for girls and boys with foreign backgrounds. The work done within the context of the Action Plan contributes to this objective.

3.2 International aspects

United Nations

A number of the United Nations (UN) conventions on human rights contain obligations related to racism, non-discrimination, and hate crime. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) is of central importance to the work against racism and hate crime. Countries that have ratified the Convention have undertaken to abolish all discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination consists of independent experts whose task is to review the measures taken to comply with the provisions in the Convention. Like all the other State parties, Sweden is obliged to report to the Committee on its compliance with the Convention. The Committee reviews the reports of these State parties and conducts a dialogue with them. Every four years, states that have acceded to the Convention must submit a report to the Committee on their compliance with the Convention's requirements.

For example, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which have been ratified by Sweden, all contain obligations that have a bearing on racism and non-discrimination. The UN Human Rights Council has a separate, recurring, agenda item for racism-related matters and has also constructed a number of special procedures that work with the issue in various ways, including the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent and the Special Rapporteurs on contemporary forms of racism, freedom of religion or belief, minority issues, in the field of cultural rights, and on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Council of Europe

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) is a body set up within the Council of Europe. ECRI works to combat all forms of racism, including by publishing recommendations and best practice intended for the Council of Europe's Member States. Some of these recommendations specifically focus on combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance as well as antisemitism, antigypsyism, racism against Muslims, racism and hatred online, racism and discrimination in the school system, racism in the police, racism in sport, and hate speech. ECRI also carries out country visits and subsequently presents separate country reports with recommendations.

The Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (SÖ 2000:2, Framework Convention) was ratified by Sweden in 2000. The ratification specified the five national minorities in Sweden that are mentioned above (see Section 3.1). The Framework Convention contains articles guaranteeing national minorities a list of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including protection from discrimination, hostility and violence; the freedoms of assembly, association, expression, thought, conscience and religion; and freedom of opinion and expression in their own language. The Council of Europe has set up an advisory committee that monitors compliance with the Framework Convention. The states that have ratified the Framework Convention are required to report on progress every five years.

European Union

The fight against racism and antisemitism is one of the EU's priority areas. A number of initiatives in this area have been taken by the EU in recent years. In September 2020, the European Commission decided on the EU Anti-racism Action Plan, containing a series of actions for the next five years. The EU Anti-racism Action Plan calls for better application of EU law, better coordination, fair policing and protection, increased awareness and better gathering of information and data for monitoring. In October 2021, the European Commission presented the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, which extends to 2030. It sets out a series of actions across three pillars: Preventing and combating all forms of antisemitism; Protecting and fostering Jewish life in the EU; and Education, Research and Holocaust remembrance. Progress reports for the Action Plan

and strategy were presented in autumn 2024. Both reports noted that progress has been made while many challenges remain.

To support Member States in their work in this area, the European Commission has set up working groups to implement the EU Anti-racism Action Plan and the EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, each of which are composed of national representatives and other experts. The European Commission has also appointed three special coordinators – on anti-racism, on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, and on combating anti-Muslim hatred – to pursue this work. The European Commission also has a High Level Group on combating hate speech and hate crime which aims to facilitate the sharing and dissemination of good practices between national government agencies, and of methods for improved responses to different forms of intolerance, as well as a High Level Group on Non-discrimination, Equality and Diversity to deepen cooperation between Member States and the Commission to combat discrimination and promote equality.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) provides EU institutions and Member States with evidence-based support and expertise on fundamental rights, building on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. FRA is an independent EU body and in its work programme for 2024, which builds on the Agency's Strategic Plan for 2023–2028, anti-racism and non-discrimination is one of the Agency's areas of activity.

4. Status report

This section aims to provide a status report on the incidence of racism and hate crime in Sweden from a wide selection of national and international sources. The section also includes views submitted by civil society organisations in various dialogues.

4.1 National inputs

Research, surveys, and statistics on racism and discrimination

According to the second edition of the report *Historical research into racism and racial intolerance in Sweden: An analytical knowledge overview* (The Living History Forum, 2024), racism and racist phenomena can be traced back many centuries in Sweden's history and have targeted various groups throughout history. According to the report, racism and negative attitudes towards the groups so targeted have historically been justified by arguments based on various notions about races. Different forms and manifestations of racism have been present during different periods. Among other things, the report highlights the occurrence of Afrophobia, antisemitism, antigypsyism, Islamophobia and racism against the Sami in Sweden throughout history.

In 2021, The Living History Forum published a knowledge overview of people's experiences of racism in their interactions with Swedish government agencies and other public sector activities. It covers around 500 scholarly articles, books, book chapters, and reports published between 2016 and 2021. Of these studies, around 200 concern racism within social institutions. According to the overview, the general state of knowledge indicates that people are affected by racism in many different areas of life and through Swedish government agencies and other public sector activities.

The current state of knowledge thus indicates that experiences of racism in interactions with Swedish government agencies and other public sector activities do occur. At the same time, the report notes that the picture is incomplete, as most government agencies and public sector activities have not been studied and there is a large knowledge gap concerning people's specific experiences of racism in their interactions with the public domain.

Complaints concerning discrimination have increased in recent years. According to the Equality Ombudsman's 2023 Annual Report, about 33% of the complaints received in that year relate to the ethnicity ground of

discrimination, and about 9% to the religion or other belief ground. The same Annual Report stated that most of the complaints related to working life concern discrimination connected to ethnicity. Among the complaints concerning the public domain, the most common ground related to treatment in public sector activities is ethnicity.

In the Equality Ombudsman's report on its task to produce knowledge about discrimination related to religion or other belief (2022) a picture emerges that discrimination on the ground of religion or other belief is a widespread social problem and occurs in all areas of society. The Equality Ombudsman concludes that discrimination against Muslims is widespread. In the health care system, there are examples of cases where the responsible authority/health care provider, in connection with refusing to provide care, also said something, or treated the individual poorly in some way, which was experienced by them as being related to religion. These cases include Muslim women who are treated poorly by staff at primary care health centres and who experience that there is a connection between this poor treatment and the women wearing a headscarf. Another example is Jewish parents of children who are circumcised experiencing poor treatment from the health care system, and that parents are therefore sometimes also afraid to attend child health centres.

According to the Equality Ombudsman's report *The state of discrimination* (2023) many school pupils experience harassment related to ethnicity or religion during their school years. The report is based on complaints of discrimination and various large surveys and shows that pupils are subjected to harassment by both school staff and other pupils. The Public Health Agency of Sweden's survey *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children* (2017/2018) shows that the proportion of pupils who state that they have been subjected to verbal abuse related to their ethnicity is between 8% and 13%, and the share who have been subjected to verbal abuse related to religion is between 3% and 7%. This picture is confirmed by the Friends foundation's 2022 report *Mobbningens förekomst* (The incidence of bullying) according to which a total of 7% of pupils and students (9–18 years) stated that they have been subject to verbal abuse related to ethnicity or religion.

Brå's 2023 report *Polisens arbete med profilering och likabehandling – med fokus på diskriminerande etnisk profilering* (The police's work in connection with profiling and equal treatment – with a focus on discriminatory and ethnic profiling)

was produced following requests from the Swedish Police Authority and has a special focus on ethnicity. The results show that the police's work involves a risk of discriminatory ethnic profiling, and that there are differing views among both managers at different levels and patrolling police officers about whether ethnicity has any significance or not when the police are building a suspect profile. Experiences of ethnic profiling are also described in the report *Being black in the EU – Experiences of people of African descent* (FRA, 2023). This report investigates the experiences of people of African descent in twelve EU Member States, including Sweden.

The research overview *Rekrytera utan att diskriminera – Vad visar forskningen?* (Recruit without discrimination – what does the research show?) (Equality Ombudsman, 2023) reports on the current position of research which shows that people are subjected to discrimination in recruitment processes, among other things due to their ethnicity and religion or other belief. The research overview shows, for example, that if the job seeker has what in research is described as an Arabic-sounding name, this means a significantly lower level of positive responses from employers.

The trade union Akavia report *Upplevd diskriminering bland akademiker – omedveten och osynlig* (2023) (Perceived discrimination among the university-educated – unconscious and invisible) shows that one in five members with a foreign background feel that they are discriminated against. Of members from the Middle East and from the north and south of Africa, one in three have this experience. The latest report from Kommunal *Var kommer du ifrån? Egentligen?* (2024) (Where are you from? Really?) shows that the risk of being subjected to harassment, bullying or being rendered invisible is 17.9% higher among respondents born outside the Nordic countries.

In recent years, the Swedish Defence Research Institute (FOI) has produced several studies on the incidence of racist expressions on various social media platforms and how racism can be found in anti-democratic extremist environments on the Internet, including in the report *Rutten demokrati – konspirationspropaganda, rasism och våld* (2023) (Rotten democracy – Conspiracy propaganda, racism and violence).

Hate crime statistics

Brå's 2023 report *Polisanmälda hatbrott 2022 – En sammanställning av de ärenden som hatbrottsmarkerats av polisen* (English summary: Hate crimes reported to the

police in 2022 – A compilation of the cases that were classified as hate crimes) compiles statistics based on all reports of crimes that the police classified as hate crime, where Brå in turn identified a hate crime motive in the police report. Hate crime is a collective legal term for criminal acts where the motive was to insult a person, a population group or another such group. It is the motive for the offence that determines whether it is hate crime or not. According to Brå a large number of cases of hate crime go unreported. This means that the statistics describe how hate crimes are identified in police reports and the structure of the reported incidents, but they do not say much about the *incidence* of hate crime in society. Of the hate crime motives identified, xenophobic and racist hate crimes (53%) were the most common, followed by hate crimes that target religious groups (16%). Among the xenophobic and racist hate crime motives identified, 17% were Afrophobic and 1% antigypsy, with 1% of hate crimes targeting Sami and 35% in the category Other xenophobic and racist motives. The latter category includes on the one hand general and unspecified xenophobic and racist hate crime motives, and on the other hand hate crimes targeting specific ethnicities and nationalities that were too few in number to be reported separately. Hate crimes that are not reported separately at group level are also included in the aggregate statistics.

Xenophobic and racist hate crimes have a varied offence structure. The most common types of hate crime offences were molestation and defamation offences, but threats and violence were also relatively common. Hate crimes usually occurred in or near the victim's home or in a public place, but also in schools, on public transport, and in digital environments. Among hate crimes targeting religious groups, Islamophobic hate crimes were most common (8% of all hate crime motives), followed by antisemitic (4%) and other hate crimes against religious groups, including Christians (4%). However, it should be noted that the size of the different groups targeted differs markedly. More detailed descriptions of hate crimes related to various forms of racism can be found in Section 4.3.

Brå has also reported on the processing of hate crimes based on the offences reported in 2020. Of the 3 398 main offences registered in 2020 and processed up until May 2023, the person based clear-up rate was 6%.

According to Brå's 2022 report *Hatbrott i digitala medier* (English summary: Hate crime in digital environments), the vast majority of digital hate crimes

reported to the police in 2020 took place on social media (41%) or via digital call and communication services (34%). Xenophobic and racist hate crime motives were by far the most common (44%), followed by hate crimes against religious groups (27%). According to Brå, it can be assumed that a large number of cases of digital hate crime, as well as physical hate crime, go unreported.

According to Brå's 2020 report *Självrapporterad utsatthet för hatbrott* (English summary: Self-reported exposure to hate crime), one fifth of all victims of crime according to the 2019 Swedish Crime Survey stated that there was a hate crime motive. In the study, Brå presents self-reported exposure to hate crime based on three large surveys of crime in Sweden: the Swedish Crime Survey, the School Survey on Crime, and the Politician's Safety Survey. In all three surveys, the most common motive for being subjected to a hate crime was skin colour, nationality or ethnic background. The second most common motive in all three surveys is the victim's religion. The groups victimised also commonly reported more than one hate crime motive for the same incident.

Views from civil society

Some of the views communicated in dialogues with representatives of civil society involved with issues related to racism, hate crime, discrimination and human rights are set out in the following. The views communicated by civil society on specific forms of racism are set out in Section 4.3.

Representatives of many organisations have emphasised the importance of any national plan against racism being clear, easy to evaluate, and having a long-term focus. Civil society representatives also highlighted that such a plan should be coordinated with other action plans in the broader area of democracy. Representatives also see a need for more concrete and measurable actions with clear objectives and timing, as well as long-term funding. The lack of equality data was also highlighted.

Schools and other activities that encounter children and young people have been highlighted as particularly strategic areas requiring action. Efforts need to be made early as anti-democratic values are gaining an increasing foothold among young people. The need to work preventively to ensure the protection of children and young people against discrimination was highlighted.

The importance of increasing trust in the judicial system – due to perceived shortcomings in the competence and capability of the judicial system to handle complaints that concern racism and hate crime – was also highlighted. There is a need for increased security expertise at relevant government agencies, and special protection of certain buildings.

4.2 International inputs

The following are examples of recommendations made to Sweden by various international monitoring bodies since 2017. While not legally binding, opinions and recommendations from international review bodies can provide guidance on ensuring full respect for Sweden's international human rights obligations.

United Nations

The UN's Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD Committee) reviewed Sweden's compliance with CERD in 2018, and made recommendations to Sweden including that Sweden should improve its measures to combat racism and hate crime. The CERD Committee recommended that Sweden should improve measures already in place to protect vulnerable groups, such as Afro-Swedes, Jews, Muslims, Sami and Roma.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) recommended in its seventh periodic report (2024) that Sweden should initiate measures to combat discrimination with a particular focus on vulnerable groups such as Roma, migrants and people of African or Muslim background.

In the report (2024) from her visit to Sweden, the UN's Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief recommends that Sweden should build capacity among government agencies at all levels to recognise and combat discrimination based on religion or other belief and to provide redress; as well as to investigate and prosecute religiously motivated hate crimes including hate speech and physical attacks targeting Muslims and Jews.

Council of Europe

In connection with the visit of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) to Sweden in April 2024, ECRI provided two priority recommendations: to improve the conditions for teachers to use

various tools developed to address issues such as racism and prejudices related to religions and beliefs; and to review police guidelines on interaction with the public and better regulate ‘stop and search’ activities, particularly when it comes to children and young people. This recommendation also calls for the introduction of an effective system of registering and tracking stop and search operations, which would also help to maintain public trust among residents in safety zones.

In its fifth opinion (2023) the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities recommended that Swedish government agencies should immediately boost their efforts to prevent and combat racism, hate crime and hate speech on social media, particularly with regard to the Jewish, Roma and Sami minorities.

4.3 About different forms of racism

This section provides a status report, with examples, on how different forms of racism are being expressed in Sweden today.

Anti-Muslim racism

In dialogues with organisations representing Muslims, experiences emerged of how ignorance about Islam, Muslims and anti-Muslim racism results in Muslims, also as a group, being associated with violent extremism and an honour-based culture. The dialogues have also provided a picture of children’s and young people’s exposure to this form of racism in schools. This picture is confirmed by a report from the Equality Ombudsman on discrimination related to religion or other belief (2022), which shows how Muslim pupils are subjected to harassment by both other pupils and teachers. The report shows that discrimination against Muslims is widespread, and that threats, physical attacks, problems renting premises and certain funeral matters constitute obstacles for faith communities.

Among the hate crimes reported to the police in 2022 that targeted religious groups (Brå, 2023), Islamophobic hate crimes were the most common (8% of all hate crime motives). Islamophobic hate crimes differ from antisemitic hate crimes as they often involve molestation, which usually occurs in a public place or near the victim’s home. Compared to all other hate crime motives, Islamophobic hate crime is the category where the largest proportion of victims are women. In May 2024, Brå published a memorandum with a summary of hate crimes with Islamophobic motives

that were reported after Hamas's terrorist attack in Israel on 7 October until 31 December 2023. During this period, reports to the police of this category of hate crime increased by 24% compared to the same period in 2022. A majority of these reports concerned the offence agitation against a population group that had occurred in a digital environment.

In 2021, Brå published a study, the main conclusion of which is that Islamophobic hate crime takes many different forms and is not confined to any particular place, time or person. Among the reports, threats and molestations constituted the largest category of offences, followed by agitation against a population group, defamation, violent offences and graffiti. Some of these forms of racism are more common in the incidents captured in both the reports and interviews. They include verbal abuse, pushing and shoving, and having one's headscarf ripped off (which mainly affects Muslim women in public places). Other recurring themes include neighbours being guilty of repeated threats and harassment, agitation against a population group on social media, and offences of varying seriousness that target mosques. In Brå's interviews with representatives of Muslim congregations, it emerged that many of these incidents are not reported to the police, and that the victims often experienced feelings of social exclusion and injustice.

In 2022, FOI published the report *En studie i fördom – Om rasistiska stereotyper i digitala miljöer* (A study in prejudice – Racist stereotypes in digital environments). The report shows that Muslims and other people from the Middle East and North Africa in particular are targeted by the prejudices of others. Because the survey was conducted in spring 2022, the results were tested against incidents reported in the media during the period. A sharp increase in manifestations of Islamophobia coincided with the reporting of the riots in Sweden in April 2022 and the Quran burnings in 2023.

Antisemitism

In various dialogues, representatives of Jewish organisations have emphasised that knowledge about antisemitism and its various manifestations is poor among government agencies and in society in general. They also stressed that there is a lack of research on antisemitism and the history of antisemitism, and a lack of knowledge and understanding of its defining features such as beliefs that Jews are a dangerous group with a great deal of power. Children's and young people's exposure in schools was

highlighted. The representatives stressed that limited access in schools to images or narratives about different ways of being Jewish and living a Jewish life are contributing to a stereotypical image of Jews.

The report *Antisemitiska hatbrott (2019)* (English summary: Antisemitic hate crime) describes how hate crime and other expressions of antisemitism are everyday occurrences in the lives of many Jews. Among other things, the report states that antisemitism occurs in many different groups in the population, and that far from all people who subject others to antisemitism belong to an organised group. However, Brå's report describes radical nationalist and violent jihadist groups as posing a threat to both individuals and Jewish congregations and associations.

After Hamas's terrorist attack in Israel on 7 October 2023, antisemitism has increased in Sweden. An interim report from Brå on a task to compile data about the Jewish minority's exposure to antisemitism in Sweden (May 2024) describes the offences flagged as hate crime with antisemitic motives reported in the period 7 October to 31 December 2023, i.e. after Hamas's terrorist attack in Israel. The results show that almost five times more antisemitic hate crimes were reported compared to the same period the previous year. In terms of the category of offence and the crime scene, a similar picture emerges as has been noted previously for antisemitic hate crimes. It is suspected that many cases go unreported and in both the Brå report on antisemitic hate crime (2019) and in meetings with representatives of Jewish organisations, it appears that many Jews choose not to report incidents of this nature to the police.

A research study conducted by the Segerstedt Institute (University of Gothenburg, September 2024) shows how antisemitism has affected and been experienced by Jews in Sweden and its manifestations in the mass media, social media and other societal arenas since Hamas's terrorist attack in Israel on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent war in Gaza. The study shows, for example, that Jews in Sweden have experienced a significant rise in antisemitism, including from people with a background in the Middle East, and feel abandoned and betrayed by parts of society.

A survey of how Swedish Jews experienced the situation after Hamas's terrorist attack in Israel (Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities/Infostat, November 2023) shows that in the month before the

survey was conducted, members of Sweden's Jewish congregations had felt much less safe about living openly as Jewish in Sweden. For example, more than seven out of ten respondents felt much less safe. The absolutely dominant factor in this is an increased fear of agitation against them and harassment, but there is also a widespread fear of violence, persecution and deadly violence.

The report *Antisemitism i Sverige: en jämförelse av attityder och föreställningar 2005 och 2020* (The Living History Forum, 2021) (English summary: Antisemitism in Sweden: A comparison of attitudes and ideas in 2005 and 2020) investigated antisemitic attitudes and ideas in the Swedish population. The study shows a decline in support for antisemitic notions in 2020 compared to 2005. However, the authors of the report stress that antisemitic notions are still held by a significant minority of the population.

Brå's hate crime statistics report *Polisanmälda hatbrott 2022* (2023) (English summary: Hate crimes reported to the police in 2022) shows that 4% of hate crimes were antisemitic. The antisemitic offences were mainly agitation against a population group, which is an offence usually not directed at a specific person, and the offences mostly occurred in digital environments but also in public places and in schools.

The spread of antisemitic posts on digital platforms and forums was investigated in the report *Antisemitism in Social Media: Conspiracies, stereotypes, and Holocaust denial* (FOI, 2021). Among other things, the report shows that antisemitic content is present on all the platforms studied, and negativity towards Jews is expressed in almost 35% of all posts that mentioned Jews or Judaism.

In recent years, the incidence of antisemitism in schools was surveyed by the City of Stockholm and the City of Malmö. In both of these municipalities, Jewish pupils bear witness to the use of language and actions that have made them feel singled out, stressed and sad. In the survey, virtually all the pupils interviewed stated that they had experienced verbal or physical assaults of some kind, but how common and how serious these were varied.

Anti-Black racism

Afro-Swedes' exposure to racism in all major sectors of society such as education, health care, housing and working life, as well as the need for

equality data to make this inequality apparent, has been raised in dialogues with organisations representing Afro-Swedes. It has also been argued that Afro-Swedish children are a visible minority and therefore risk being subjected to racism as early as in preschool. The need for enhanced knowledge about racism and anti-Black racism in the judicial system, and that the police need to improve their procedures when they receive reports concerning Afrophobic hate crimes, also emerged in these dialogues.

In Brå's study of Afrophobic hate crime (2022), it appears that, with the exception of hate crimes with generally xenophobic motives, Afrophobia is the most common motive among reported hate crimes. According to Brå, these offences affect the everyday lives of Afro-Swedes and risk contributing to a heightened sense of exclusion. Hate crime against Afro-Swedes is also characterised by a high incidence of violence. The results of the study clearly show that Afrophobic hate crime can take different forms and occur in many different contexts. Many of them, mainly men, have been treated by the police in ways that have led them to feel that the judicial system is more likely to view black people as crime suspects than as victims of crime. Brå's latest hate crime statistics report (2023) also shows that hate crime in schools more often had an Afrophobic motive compared to most other motives.

According to FRA's report *Being Black in the EU* (2023), 27% of respondents in Sweden had experienced some form of discrimination in the five years prior to the survey. 51% of the men surveyed said they had been stopped by the police due to ethnic profiling in the last five years, which is just above the average for the countries surveyed in the report.

Antigypsyism

Representatives of Roma organisations have highlighted experiencing potential structural racism in their interactions with various public sector activities and would like to see measures to combat this. It has also been argued that Roma are subjected to hate crimes in both their private and professional lives but rarely report such incidents. Public ignorance of the Roma and antigypsyism is still relatively high despite their long-standing historical presence in Sweden – an ignorance that can also contribute to negative attitudes.

Among the hate crime motives identified by Brå in 2022, 1% were antigypsy (Brå 2023). Of all the main offences in which Brå identified a xenophobic or

racist hate crime motive in 2020, the clear-up rate was between 5% and 11% in May 2023. Antigypsy hate crimes had the highest clear-up rate of about 11%. Since the number of reported offences with these motives was very few, individual procedural decisions affect the percentage distribution greatly.

A study conducted by the Stockholm County Administrative Board (2021) gives a picture of young Roma being subjected to antigypsyism in the form of harassment and discrimination on the grounds of their Roma identity. The Equality Ombudsman has reviewed the information reported by the respondents themselves and has found that the number of reports to the police per year from Roma increased slightly between 2005 and 2021, and then decreased again in 2022 and 2023. The reports received in 2023 mainly concerned discrimination in the provision of goods and services, and other discrimination in education, working life and social services.

In the survey *Roma and Travellers in six countries* conducted by FRA (2019), half of the Roma and Travellers interviewed in Sweden reported that they had experienced discrimination in the year preceding the survey. Discrimination was most often experienced in daily life, for example in shops or restaurants. Of all the surveyed groups in the six countries included in the study, the most likely form of discrimination experienced by the interviewees in Sweden was hate-motivated harassment (55%). 12% reported experiencing hate-motivated physical violence. Furthermore, of the groups surveyed, the Roma were among those with the highest rates of unreported harassment and violence. 15% of the respondents stopped by the police think it was because of being Roma, even though Swedish Roma have a relatively high level of trust in both the police and the judiciary.

Racism against Sami

In dialogues with representatives of Sami organisations, it appears that racism against Sami can be expressed in the form of sabotage, taunts and degrading treatment. Reports in the national media and on social media, often in connection with coverage of land and reindeer husbandry issues, leads to increased threats and hatred according to respondents. It has been pointed out that those who express their Sami identity clearly, reindeer herding Sami, and people with Sami names are the most frequent victims. Dialogues with Sami representatives have also presented a picture of racism against Sami being expressed in acts that target reindeer and that these

crimes are not always flagged as hate crimes, which is a problem because it renders them invisible as potential hate crimes. Sami representatives say that in their experience, the judicial system down-prioritises these investigations. It also emerged that that Sami rarely report these offences which, according to Sami representatives, is due to those who do report them being met with distrust and ignorance, and that many feel they are without legal protection, and because the percentage of complaints that lead to prosecution is small.

In a survey conducted by the Public Health Agency of Sweden (2023), a larger proportion of Sami than the population in general stated that they had been treated or dealt with in ways that left them feeling insulted (26.2% compared with 18.1%) in the last 3 months.

This picture is confirmed by a study conducted by Brå (2024) on hate crime against Sami, which showed that hatred and racism against Sami occur in different types of environments and contexts. It is expressed in schools, in the workplace, in the home environment, in public spaces and online. Something that distinguishes hate crime against the Sami from other hate crime motives is that the offences are more often committed within smaller communities, and that the offender is more often someone the victim knows. Verbal attacks occur face to face, via telephone and on social media, for example through posts targeting Sami young people. The seriousness of the offences varies from insulting descriptions of Sami people to grossly racist invective, threats and violent offences. Although anyone having a Sami identity can be subjected to hate crime and other expressions of racism, the risk is greater for those who exhibit clear Sami attributes in the form of their attire or names that are identifiable as Sami. That risk also leads to some Sami choosing to conceal their Sami identity. This can be expressed in avoiding wearing Sami attire in public, or not disclosing their Sami origin in schools or in the workplace. The interviews highlight that Sami in reindeer herding families can be particularly vulnerable to hate crime. Many of the offences involve reindeer and comprise various types of incidents: from failing to stop after a collision with a reindeer and dogs that have hunted or attacked reindeer, to reindeer having been deliberately run down by snow scooters or shot.

5. Measures

This section describes the identified needs and the work currently being carried out in this area. The section also describes the Government's

measures within the framework of the Action Plan's four focus areas, their sub-objectives and other general measures.

5.1 General measures

This section contains measures in the Action Plan that cover all four focus areas.

Racism in digital environments

Internet use is taking up more and more time in people's everyday lives, especially those of children and young people. Racism in digital environments is widespread and is expressed as open hatred as well as prejudices and conspiracy theories.

The focus areas *Schools* and the *Judicial system* describe how racism in digital environments needs to be made visible in the school's work with safety and security, and the importance of work to combat cyber hate crime. The *Working life* focus area also describes the need to call attention to the risk of discrimination when employers use AI-generated information, for example. The following sets out more general needs and efforts to prevent and combat racism in digital environments.

Knowledge of racism on the Internet

Knowledge about the incidence of racism online has improved in recent years. Among others, the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) has presented data on the incidence of antisemitic and anti-Muslim posts on various social media platforms. The Agency has also produced data which highlights that racism is a very central theme in anti-democratic extremist environments, and how racism functions both to mobilise and create cohesion in such environments. In its 2023 report *Rotten democracy – Conspiracy propaganda, racism and violence*, the Agency notes that detailed knowledge about the connection between ideology and acts of violence is needed if this violence is to be effectively combated.

There is a need for additional surveys in order to better target tools and initiatives to prevent antisemitism and other forms of racism.

Moderation of social media platforms

Dialogues with civil society in the context of work against racism have raised concerns about the incidence of threats, hatred and racism on digital

platforms as well as the lack of ownership and accountability when it comes to how both illegal and legal content are handled. Controversial content tends to be promoted on these platforms, which thus facilitate the dissemination of racist content, for example. The challenges associated with content moderation are set out in the report *Online content moderation – Current challenges in detecting hate speech* by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2024). The report also shows how misogynistic hatred, and hatred based on stereotyping of people of African origin, Jews and Roma were common, and that half of the posts were considered harassment.

Since 17 February 2024, the Digital Service Act (DSA) has been fully implemented. The Act imposes greater obligations to deal with illegal content on providers of online platforms and search engines, among others, which means greater protection for people who are subjected to harassment or other discriminatory acts online.

Media and information literacy

There is a need to strengthen individuals to become more conscious users of social media in a time of rapid technological development where the use of AI has shifted the ground rules for interpreting information. There is a need to improve the individual's basic ability to comprehend and critically evaluate what is communicated, while at the same time maintaining trust in credible senders. In recent years, the Swedish Media Council (now the Swedish Agency for the Media) and civil society organisations have contributed knowledge and educational materials to raise awareness of how text, images and symbols online can confirm racist ideas. The Agency will now conduct a broad initiative to strengthen media and information literacy in the population by improving knowledge about i.a. today's information and media landscape and thereby also strengthening resilience against online disinformation.

Measures

- The Living History Forum has been tasked with producing a knowledge overview of the spread of antisemitism online and measures to combat this. The task includes identifying key success factors and challenges in the work to combat antisemitism online and propose further measures in this area.

- Since 2022, the Swedish Defence Research Agency has also had a permanent mission to conduct surveys and analyses of violent extremism and racism in digital environments.
- In 2024 and 2025, the Swedish Agency for the Media will conduct a broad and long-term sustainable national initiative to strengthen the population's media and information literacy. The tasks will be carried out in collaboration with the network MIK Sverige (MIK Sweden). MIK is the acronym in Swedish for media and information literacy.

Work at local and regional level

In order to achieve the objective of a society free from racism, work must be done at the national as well as the regional and local levels. Although this Action Plan aims primarily to create a structure for national efforts to combat racism and hate crime, it is important that its measures take into account the challenges and needs of different activities at the local and regional levels. It is also important to create the conditions for the knowledge produced and tools developed by national government agencies to reach and be used by activities within the municipalities and regions. The following sets out the municipalities' work to combat racism, ongoing initiatives that support the work to combat racism at the local and regional levels, and the need for more knowledge in the area.

The municipalities' work to combat racism

In its report of the work under the National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime (2023), The Living History Forum noted that a number of municipalities and regions had developed their work against racism. Some of them had done this by developing local plans and strategies that integrated work against racism into their core activities.

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions supports municipalities and regions to work more systematically to combat racism and discrimination. This is done primarily by coordinating a network for work with development and sharing experiences. The basis of this work is a ten-point programme that includes municipal areas of competence within education, housing, and employment, as well as culture and recreation. Metropolitan municipalities and around ten other municipalities are part of the network, which is linked to the European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCAR).

Work to combat racism is often part of the municipalities' broader efforts on rights issues, and can also vary between them, depending on their different needs and circumstances. More knowledge is needed on how this work at the national level can best support the work at local level.

Initiatives to support this work at the local and regional levels

A number of awareness-raising initiatives to combat racism are currently being implemented, specifically targeting employees in municipal and regional activities. The Living History Forum offers courses for public sector employees working in various activities, and the National Board of Health and Welfare distributes knowledge support to staff working in the health care system. In addition, a number of government agencies offer awareness-raising initiatives targeting staff within the school system.

Central government grants for civil society activities that combat or prevent racism or similar forms of intolerance are often utilised for interventions at the regional and local levels. The same applies to central government grants to local anti-discrimination offices. More information about these can be found below under the heading *Grants to civil society*.

County administrative boards' work with human rights

The Swedish Agency for Public Management's analysis of the National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime states that the plan was used to some extent in local efforts against racism. In addition, the analysis identifies the need to improve central government coordination between adjacent areas and the need for awareness-raising initiatives at the local level. The Swedish Agency for Public Management also makes the assessment that the Government can utilise the county administrative boards to a greater extent in order to reach out to the municipalities.

In the 2024 appropriation directions, the county administrative boards were tasked with supporting municipalities and regions in their work with human rights. This task is to be carried out in dialogue with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions and includes providing knowledge and methods in the area and promoting the sharing of experiences. The county administrative boards are now required to report on how work to combat racism can be included in their work with human rights.

Measures

- As part of their mandate to support municipalities and regions in their work with human rights, the county administrative boards must report on how efforts to combat various forms of racism, including antisemitism, can be included in this work.

Support to and dialogue with civil society

Civil society organisations' contributions to the work to combat racism and hate crime are central in this area. Civil society often has the knowledge and commitment as well as the conditions in place for reaching those who are victims of racism. It is therefore important to strengthen opportunities to utilise this resource in various ways. The following section reports on the needs and ongoing efforts to facilitate support to and dialogue with civil society in the fight against racism.

Grants to civil society

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) distributes central government grants annually under the Ordinance (2008:62) on central government grants to activities to combat racism and similar forms of intolerance. These grants are used to increase knowledge about and raise awareness of racism and other intolerance through various activities, often through the creation of new methods and networks.

MUCF also distributes central government grants annually to local anti-discrimination offices in accordance with the Ordinance (2002:989) on state support for activities that prevent and combat discrimination. The purpose of these activities is to have an impact locally and to prevent and combat discrimination on all the seven grounds covered by the Discrimination Act, which include ethnicity and religion or other belief.

Hatred and threats affect parts of civil society in particular

It has emerged in dialogues with civil society that faith communities and other organisations suffer threats and hatred that affect their ability to pursue their activities. As of 2024, the central government grant for security-enhancement measures to civil society organisations has more than doubled. This central government grant can be provided to faith communities or organisations that contribute to promoting human rights and safeguarding democracy in their activities, and whose activities are affected by fears of

threats, violence or harassment related to skin colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, or the organisation's work to combat racism or similar forms of hostility.

Dialogue with civil society

Dialogues with civil society are important for identifying challenges and needs for action and for following up these needs and challenges in the work to combat racism and hate crime. The Government conducts focused discussions (*sakråd*) on racism including anti-Muslim racism, antisemitism, anti-Black racism, antigypsyism and racism against the Sami within the context of this work. Racism issues are also addressed in dialogues within the national minorities policy, as well as with faith communities and in other contexts.

There is also collaboration and dialogue with representatives of Jewish organisations within the framework of the Government's initiative *Task Force for Jewish Life*, which takes a comprehensive approach to the work against antisemitism and to strengthen Jewish life in Sweden. The Task Force consists of state secretaries from several ministries, representatives from Jewish civil society, central government agencies and other experts.

The Living History Forum has set up a reference group of representatives from civil society. They play an important role in monitoring the work done by The Living History Forum to combat racism. In addition, representatives from civil society contribute in various ways to the work that a number of the government agencies carry out within the framework of the Action Plan.

Measures

- The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society distributes funds annually to activities that combat or prevent racism or similar forms of intolerance.
- The Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities has been tasked with implementing efforts to strengthen security for faith communities and raise awareness about their security situation and their exposure to various forms of racism and hate crime.
- The Government intends to continue its dialogues with civil society within the framework of the Action Plan. In these dialogues, the situation and experiences of children and young people will be given special attention and consideration.

Research and other sources of knowledge

In recent years, research reports, reports from government agencies and surveys conducted by civil society have helped to enhance knowledge about the incidence of different forms of racism and hate crime and their consequences for people. To be able to develop the work in this area against the background of the challenges in society, but also to monitor and evaluate this work, deeper knowledge in certain areas as well as knowledge that enables comparisons over time are needed. The following section reports on the needs and ongoing efforts to promote research and foster other sources of knowledge in the fight against racism.

General information on the composition of the population and their living conditions forms important, and often essential, input for shaping and monitoring the Government's policies. At the same time, the issue of data collection, particularly in the context of work against racism, is complex. Methodology questions must be considered concerning anonymity and privacy, as well as to the concerns of some sections of the population about the potential collection of certain data. There is therefore reason to continue being restrictive when it comes to statistics and data collection related to ethnicity. The question of how to obtain relevant data about the conditions affecting people's lives that are related to racism and discrimination in an appropriate way therefore requires further and deeper analysis.

Support for research

The Swedish Research Council's task to issue calls for applications for funding for a national research programme on racism, in consultation with the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte), provides the basis for the ongoing development of vital knowledge. The Swedish Research Council is also implementing a special research initiative involving multiple calls based on a previously reported task to identify and produce recommendations regarding research on the Holocaust and antisemitism, as well as the victimisation of other groups in the Holocaust including Roma, and antigypsyism. The aim is to strengthen the current research field in the long term.

Deeper knowledge about hate crime

Brå's specialised reports on Afrophobic, antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crime and hate crime targeting the Sami have contributed vital knowledge about the victimisation that different groups of people live with in Sweden,

who the perpetrators are, and the consequences that hate crime has in people's everyday lives. Antigypsy hate crime will also be investigated.

Attitudes can be followed over time

We need to know how the incidence of racism and discrimination trends over time. Here, the Equality Ombudsman's annual reports on the state of discrimination in Sweden provide important inputs for monitoring the ways in which people are being subjected to discrimination.

The Living History Forum has previously conducted attitude surveys as a way to acquire knowledge about how prevalent different attitudes are towards different groups, and how they trend over time. For example, The Living History Forum has conducted surveys of the prevalence and incidence of intolerance among Swedish school pupils, and of antisemitic attitudes and beliefs in the Swedish population. The Living History Forum has now been tasked with conducting studies that will enable comparisons with the results of these previous studies.

The conditions for monitoring trends over time in terms of manifestations of racism and intolerance in the entire population need improvement. The Government has therefore tasked the Living History Forum with producing a study to enable this.

Measures

- The Living History Forum will conduct a study of intolerance in the Swedish population. The study will cover attitudes and beliefs about vulnerable groups such as Afro-Swedes, Jews, Muslims, Roma and Sami.
- The Living History Forum has been tasked with conducting a study of antisemitic attitudes and beliefs in the Swedish population. The task must enable comparisons with previous studies of the population carried out by The Living History Forum.
- The Swedish Research Council, in consultation with the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte), has been instructed to continue to issue calls for applications for funding for a national research programme on racism.
- The report *Ett starkt judiskt liv för framtida generationer – Nationell strategi för att stärka judiskt liv i Sverige 2025–2034 (SOU 2024:3)* (Strengthening Jewish life for future generations – National strategy for strengthening Jewish life in Sweden 2025–2034) presents proposals on how Jewish life

in Sweden can be strengthened. The report also contains some proposals on how Sweden's work to combat antisemitism can be strengthened in order to strengthen Jewish life in Sweden. The Government intends to present a long-term strategy with measures to strengthen Jewish life in Sweden based on this report.

- Developments in the world since Hamas's terrorist attack in Israel on 7 October 2023 and the rise in antisemitism following this have meant that there is still a need for efforts to prevent and combat antisemitism in the society. The Government will implement measures to strengthen its work to combat antisemitism, including through awareness-raising initiatives.
- The Government intends to coordinate its strategic work to strengthen Jewish life with strategic work to combat antisemitism. Therefore, the National strategy to strengthen Jewish life that the Government intends to present will be linked to the Government's already announced initiatives to combat antisemitism.

5.2 Schools

Schools are required to prevent and respond to racism with knowledge and active efforts. The sub-objective of the *Schools* focus area is:

Teachers and other staff in schools have acquired better knowledge and tools to prevent and combat racism.

Specifically identified government agencies: the Equality Ombudsman, Living History Forum, and Swedish National Agency for Education.

Schools are responsible for ensuring a safe school environment for all pupils; an environment that must be free from discrimination and degrading treatment. Schools must also promote lifelong learning and impart an understanding of human rights and the equal value of all people. The first part of the curriculum states that racism must be prevented and responded to with knowledge and active efforts.

Reports from the Equality Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden show that racism and discrimination are part of children's and young people's everyday lives in schools. Various forms of racism can be expressed as verbal and physical harassment by both the school staff and

other pupils. However, teachers say that they lack the knowledge and tools to combat racism in the classroom and the school environment more broadly.

The following lists the more specific needs of teachers and other staff in schools and the current initiatives to give them better knowledge and tools to prevent and combat racism.

School pupils' attitudes measured over time

Although knowledge about children's and young people's exposure to racism and discrimination has improved in recent years, there is still a need for both deeper knowledge in the area, and broader and general knowledge that shows the trend over time. Among other things, there is a lack of current knowledge about young people's attitudes towards groups at risk of being subjected to racism and intolerance. The Living History Forum has therefore been tasked with conducting a study of Swedish school pupils' attitudes around intolerance, which will also contribute to enhancing knowledge about young people's lived experience of various forms of racism. The design of the study must enable comparisons with the results of the Living History Forum's previously conducted attitude surveys around intolerance.

Support for work with the school's mission to promote democracy

Schools teach children and young people about fundamental democratic values and human rights. Support is needed for systematic work to strengthen democracy in different parts of the school system. The Swedish National Agency for Education and The Living History Forum have therefore developed the tool *Demokratistegen* (Democracy ladder), which can be used in schools' work to counter antisemitism and other forms of racism. These government agencies are now tasked with creating the conditions for the tool to reach and be used by both preschools and schools.

Knowledge support and materials for teachers

Since 2016, The Living History Forum has been conducting courses in various forms of historical and contemporary racism for school staff. The Living History Forum and the Segerstedt Institute at the University of Gothenburg also carry out special initiatives in the form of awareness-raising initiatives to combat antisemitism for teachers and other school staff.

There is still a need for support materials on various forms of racism for teachers and other school staff. The Living History Forum is implementing a number of projects to produce such materials and is tasked with producing support materials on Islamophobia and racism against the Sami. The Living History Forum has also carried out a survey of knowledge about antigypsyism in compulsory schools and upper secondary schools, which found that the level of knowledge about the history of the Roma in Sweden and their exposure to antigypsyism is low among pupils and teachers. The survey also shows that access to teaching and learning materials on the history of the Roma and their exposure to antigypsyism is limited.

Deeper knowledge about various forms of racism

There is also a need for deeper and more up-to-date knowledge about how different forms of racism are being expressed in schools today. The recent rise in antisemitism calls for a good understanding of how it might be expressed as well as knowledge about and tools for combating antisemitism in the classroom. Against this background, the Swedish National Agency for Education is conducting a national study of antisemitism in the school system. There is also a lack of knowledge about the racism and discrimination that Afro-Swedish pupils are exposed to in schools, even at a young age, because of their skin colour. The Equality Ombudsman has therefore been tasked with developing and disseminating this knowledge.

A safe environment at school – even online

Because the well-being of pupils in schools can be greatly influenced by what happens online, the Internet needs to be included in the school's work with safety. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate's 2023 report *Skolors arbete för en trygg miljö på nätet, fri från kränkningar* (Schools work for a safe environment online, free from degrading treatment) shows that the principals of half of the schools reviewed need to include the Internet in their safety work and form a picture of pupils' exposure online in order to be able to adapt interventions. There is also a need to utilise pupils' knowledge of the Internet to a greater extent, and to improve their knowledge about the school's responsibilities in this area. The Swedish National Agency for Education has been assigned a task to investigate the use of digital devices in schools and school-age educare, and how this differs between the sexes. The task also includes analysing pupils' exposure to digital dimensions of violence, i.e. degrading treatment, violence and threats of violence –

including honour-related violence and oppression – as well as racism and intolerance, via digital devices.

Over a number of years, the Swedish Media Council, now the Swedish Agency for the Media, has developed knowledge and support materials related to children and young people's exposure to racism and intolerance online. In a report, the Agency highlights the need to more clearly include children and young people's digital arenas in the work of various organisations, and that adults close to children need to increase their knowledge about different forms of racism as well as the digital arenas that children and young people participate in and use.

Schools reviewed

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate regularly reviews schools' compliance with the provisions in the Education Act and the school curricula. In light of the revised curricula that came into force in autumn 2022, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate is now reviewing schools' work to prevent and respond to intolerance, oppression and violence including racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, as well as honour-related violence and oppression.

The work of schools to combat racism also includes work to combat discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities pursuant to the Discrimination Act. The number of complaints to the Equality Ombudsman relating to the education area has risen significantly over the past ten years. One of the most common grounds in complaints of discrimination in the area of education is ethnicity. In its 2023 annual report, the Equality Ombudsman pointed out that the global situation has contributed to an increased risk of discrimination in the society, including in schools. The Equality Ombudsman has received information that children of Jewish, Arab and Muslim ethnicity and religious affiliation are experiencing increased discrimination in schools. The Equality Ombudsman has therefore acted through special initiatives aimed at the schools' organisers.

A number of initiatives have been implemented by the Equality Ombudsman, the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden, and the Child and School Student Representative (BEO) at the Swedish Schools Inspectorate in order to ensure that children and adults in the child's vicinity are aware of children's rights and know where to turn if a child or young person is being

subjected to racism, discrimination or degrading treatment in school, for example.

Measures

- The Living History Forum will conduct a study of Swedish school pupils' attitudes around intolerance. The study will also enhance knowledge about young people's lived experience of various forms of racism and intolerance.
- Together with the Living History Forum, the Swedish National Agency for Education will further develop and monitor the tool for systematic work with efforts to strengthen democracy in the school system, in adult education, and in other parts of the education system for adults. The purpose of this work is to combat contemporary expressions of antisemitism and other forms of racism. The tool will be adapted so that it can be used in preschools, preschool class, compulsory school for pupils with intellectual disabilities, and upper secondary school for pupils with intellectual disabilities. The government agencies will offer process support to the target groups in their work with the tool and use outreach activities to reach more preschools and schools, especially those that have a particular need to work with the tool.
- The Living History Forum will provide continuing professional development and awareness-raising initiatives concerning various historical and contemporary forms of racism for school staff and other relevant public sector occupational groups.
- The Living History Forum will implement awareness-raising initiatives to combat antisemitism. The aim is to increase knowledge about the history and development of antisemitism, as well as contemporary antisemitism and its consequences.
- The University of Gothenburg will disseminate knowledge about ways of working to combat antisemitism to actors, such as teachers and school principals, who have an important role in combating antisemitism among children and young people. These assignments are part of the work of the Segerstedt Institute.
- The Living History Forum will promote remembrance trips to Holocaust memorial sites to raise awareness of the Nazi regime's crimes against Jews, Roma and other groups, and to increase knowledge and understanding concerning historical and contemporary antisemitism, antigypsyism and racism.

- The Swedish National Agency for Education will conduct a national study on antisemitism in the school system. The purpose of this study is to investigate the children's, pupils' and staff's experiences of contemporary antisemitic expressions, incidents and attitudes in the school system and to describe how the school system is working to combat these. The Agency will also provide examples of efforts that are contributing to or have contributed to combating antisemitism in the school system.
- The Equality Ombudsman will develop and communicate knowledge about Afro-Swedish pupils' exposure to racism and discrimination in compulsory school and upper secondary school. The knowledge produced will be communicated to both the relevant rights-holders and the relevant obligations-holders in the area, such as staff in schools or organisers.

5.3 The Judicial system

Hate crime must be fought no matter where it occurs. The sub-objective of the *Judicial system* focus area is:

a larger share of the hate crimes committed must be reported, investigated and prosecuted.

Specifically identified government agencies: the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) and Swedish Police Authority.

Reports from, among others, the Swedish Police Authority and Brå show that there is a need to continue to develop efforts to prevent and combat hate crime, for example through awareness-raising initiatives. The knowledge that Brå produces from statistics on hate crimes reported to the police and specialised studies of hate crime are an important contribution to this development work. As indicated in the status reports in previous sections, the number of cases of hate crime that go unreported in the statistics is large. The clear-up rate for hate crimes is also low. In order for people to be given opportunities for redress, but also to get an accurate picture of the incidence of hate crime and to be able to monitor it over time, efforts are needed to facilitate more people reporting hate crimes. There is also a need to be able to better identify and investigate hate crime with different motives, including offences perpetrated online, to improve prosecution rates and to develop

dialogues with activities representing groups that are particularly vulnerable to hate crime.

The following gives an account of more specific needs and current measures to ensure that a larger share of hate crimes committed are reported, investigated and prosecuted.

Efforts to identify and investigate hate crimes

An effective investigative capacity is crucial to the victim being able to obtain redress and for strengthening confidence in the police and other government agencies in the judicial system in these matters. Generally speaking, hate crimes are difficult to investigate and require special expertise, which presents a challenge.

The Swedish Police Authority's law enforcement efforts are central to more hate crimes being reported and having a higher clear-up rate. In recent years, the Swedish Police Authority has boosted its efforts to combat hate crime and other offences that threaten democracy across the country, with a national coordinator and specially designated investigation leaders and investigators. A vision that the Authority has formulated for its work is that all hate crimes will be investigated by a special resource with deeper knowledge in the area. The capacity to initially identify an offence as hate crime is therefore important. In the final report on the Police Authority's task to continue developing and improving its work to combat hate crime and other offences that threaten democracy (December 2023), the Authority notes that through this development work, it has created and continues to create better conditions for the early identification of hate crimes, and better assessments of these cases. At the same time and in light of the large number of cases that are incorrectly flagged as hate crime, the Authority sees some challenges concerning the registration of these cases.

One measure that the Police Authority assesses as crucial for better accuracy in flagging hate crime cases is to establish a review and case coordination function that can allocate cases to the right investigation resource. The Authority has also identified the need to reform certain internal training courses with a focus on improving participants' ability to identify and highlight crimes with a hate motive, and to develop methodology support for the investigation of hate crime and other offences that threaten democracy during 2024–2025.

In various dialogues, representatives of civil society organisations have highlighted that the law enforcement government agencies' lack of knowledge and understanding about antisemitic rhetoric, threats and hatred of the Sami, and how other types of hate crime are expressed, risks leading to hate crimes being rendered invisible.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) produces knowledge about hate crime through its statistics and specialised studies. Brå has previously carried out specialised studies of antisemitic, Islamophobic and Afrophobic hate crimes, and hate crimes that targeted Sami people in Sweden. There is also a need for deeper knowledge about antigypsy hate crimes. Following Hamas's terrorist attack in Israel on 7 October 2023, Jewish organisations have reported experiencing an increase in antisemitism. In light of this, Brå has been tasked with producing knowledge about the Jewish minority's exposure to antisemitism (2024). Deeper knowledge about hate crimes with different motives, along with dialogues with groups at risk of being subjected to hate crimes, provide important inputs to efforts to increase understanding of the nature of different hate crimes, their manifestations, and what the consequences are for the people who are their victims.

The Swedish Prosecution Authority has specially appointed prosecutors who handle hate crime cases. The Authority also has a specifically appointed specialist in hate crime who works closely with the specialist prosecutor to raise the level of awareness among operational prosecutors. This is done by regularly updating the guide to the law in this area, and by creating the conditions for these prosecutors to share experience and information, for example through networks and annual conferences. The Swedish Prosecution Authority is now developing the structure for this work and improving opportunities for these prosecutors to meet online to discuss issues that arise, and to disseminate relevant information to others within the organisation.

About hate crime on the Internet

The Swedish Police Authority's interim report on its task concerning hate crime and other offences that threaten democracy (March 2023) shows that there is a need to establish basic skills in the seizure of evidential material on the Internet. The Swedish Police Authority emphasises that there is still work to be done to increase capacity when it comes to cybercrime in

particular, and to establish robust monitoring of the criminal investigation capacity and clear-up rates for these crimes. Since 2022, a project on online policing has been under way with the aim of increasing the digital presence of police for law enforcement purposes. The goal is to develop a method similar to street patrols but in digital environments in order to prevent the spread of hatred and threats on the Internet and social media.

Prosecution

Of the hate crimes registered in 2020 and processed up until 31 May 2023, the clear-up rate was 6%. Just under half of these cases were closed after investigation, and about the same proportion were directly dismissed, meaning that they were closed without an investigation being initiated. The low clear-up rate is not unique to hate crimes. In general, this rate is also low among the most frequently occurring types of offences such as molestation, defamation and criminal damage.

A major challenge for investigators and prosecutors is being able to identify the hate crime motive and to prove it. Furthermore, there is rarely any incentive to highlight the hate crime motive in more serious offences if it is not going to have any material effect on the sentence handed down in the courtroom. The Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Prosecution Authority are in discussion about how to handle this challenge to see if improvements can be made within the current system. A first step is that the Swedish Prosecution Authority carries out a project to draw attention to how often the rules concerning special grounds for handing down tougher penalties in Chapter 29, Sections 2, 7, 9 and 11 of the Criminal Code have been applied, which has previously been unknown.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention's work with compiling hate crime statistics, including statistics on processed offences and reviews of the quality of police officers' flagging of hate crime, is also important for monitoring and following up on developments in this area.

Dialogues with civil society and the victims

In surveys, people who are victims of hate crime and other offences that threaten democracy often state that, for various reasons, they do not report the offences to which they have been subjected. There is a large discrepancy between self-reported exposure among certain groups and the cases that are actually reported to the authorities. The Swedish Police Authority therefore

concludes that it needs to work on building trust in all its activities, but especially when encountering individuals who have a lower level of trust in the police. The Police Authority's regional groups for combating offences threatening to democracy have a crime prevention mission and work actively with local police districts to strengthen their capacity to prevent hate crime and other offences that threaten democracy. The work includes the establishment of structured dialogues with groups at risk of being victims of this crime. These dialogues then serve as interfaces with these groups at the regional and local levels.

As part of its previous tasks, the Swedish Crime Victim Authority produced information for people who are at risk of being or have been the victims of hate crimes with Islamophobic motives. The material developed provides information about the rights of victims, how to make a police report, what happens after making the report, and about compensation to which a victim of crime may be entitled. The starting point for this material should be that it will lead to more people reporting incidents that may be hate crimes. This work serves as a starting point for how to continue the Authority's work that focuses on groups who are victims of hate crimes with other motives.

A clearer provision for the offence agitation against a population group

In Sweden, there is strong criminal protection against racist hate speech. However, in the law there is reason to express even more clearly society's rejection of, among other things, denial of the Holocaust. In March 2024, the Government therefore adopted the government bill *En tydligare bestämmelse om hets mot folkgrupp* (A clearer provision on agitation against a population group). The bill proposes that the provisions on *agitation against a population group* in the Freedom of the Press Act and in the Criminal Code should be clarified, and that their scope of application should be expanded to some extent. One of the proposals is to explicitly criminalise Holocaust denial and denial of certain other international criminal offences. Another proposal is that individuals in the protected groups can be given the status of an injured party with the right to damages.

These amendments to the Criminal Code entered into force on 1 July 2024. It is proposed that corresponding amendments to the Freedom of the Press Act should enter into force on 1 January 2027.

Measures

- The Swedish Police Authority will continue to develop its work to investigate and prosecute people for hate crimes and other offences that threaten democracy, as well as its work to combat cybercrimes with a hate motive and other offences that threaten democracy. The Swedish Police Authority must also maintain continuous dialogue and cooperation with groups who experience that they are at risk of hate crime.
- The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention has been instructed to conduct a specialised study of antigypsy hate crime to increase awareness about, and strengthen, preventive efforts against antigypsyism.
- The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention has been instructed to gather knowledge about the Jewish minority's exposure to antisemitism. The task includes describing police reports flagged as hate crime with antisemitic motives, and studying contemporary experiences of antisemitic hate crime as well as feelings of insecurity and fear of such offences, as they arise in Sweden's Jewish congregations and organisations.
- The Swedish Crime Victim Authority is to develop and disseminate information to those who are at risk of being or have been subjected to hate crime. This work is to include efforts targeting those working in government agencies and civil society who encounter people who have been subjected to hate crimes with various motives. The starting point for this should be that it will result in more people reporting incidents that may constitute hate crime.
- The Swedish Crime Victim Authority is to follow up on what the information initiatives from previous tasks (Ku2020/01463, Ju2021/03329) have meant for people who have been victims of cybercrime. The Authority is to develop information initiatives and gather knowledge about the Internet as a crime scene, as well as about the extent and mechanisms of online hate speech.
- As part of its ongoing work, the Swedish Prosecution Authority is to set up a digital network of designated hate crime prosecutors in order to improve the conditions for identifying and managing challenges in the area, and to disseminate relevant information to others within the organisation.

5.4 Welfare system and public sector activities

Public sector activities are required to counteract discrimination and operate with respect for the equal value of all people. The sub-objective of the *Welfare system and public sector activities* focus area is:

through increased knowledge and appropriate ways of working, employees in public sector activities are better placed to combat racism and discrimination and promote the equal value of all people.

Specifically identified government agencies: the Equality Ombudsman, Living History Forum and National Board of Health and Welfare.

Employees in public sector activities have a special responsibility to promote and protect human rights and fundamental democratic values in their work. However, reports from the Living History Forum, Equality Ombudsman and European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights indicate that experiences of racism and discrimination in contacts with Swedish government agencies and other public sector activities do occur. There is therefore a continued need for efforts to enable these activities to treat the population equally and offer interventions or service in relation to the individual's circumstances and needs.

The following sets out more specific needs and ongoing efforts to help improve the conditions for public sector employees to combat racism and discrimination and promote the equal value of all people.

Rights legislation and laws that provide protection against discrimination often need to be made concrete in these activities in order to be useful. Reports from the county administrative boards and the Swedish Agency for Public Management among others point to the need for work to integrate human rights into public sector activities to continue.

Racism includes notions and actions that can be both conscious and unconscious. In order for public sector employees to be better able to understand when and how attitudes, words and actions have negative consequences in the form of, for example, discriminatory treatment, more knowledge is needed about different historical perspectives on racism and about how exposure to racism in everyday life can affect people's living conditions.

Courses on various forms of racism and equal treatment

Since 2016, The Living History Forum has been tasked with conducting courses on various forms of historical and contemporary racism (Afrophobia, antisemitism, antigypsyism, Islamophobia and racism against Sami) that address different occupational groups in public sector activities. Employees at the offices of the Swedish Public Employment Service, social workers and Police Authority employees are among those who have attended these courses. Some of them have focused on assuring quality in how people are treated in public sector activities through work to counter racism.

An evaluation of this work has shown that there is a need for measures that aim to provide tools for systematic quality management in the workplace that can contribute to effecting actual change. Since 2022, the Living History Forum has therefore been tasked with developing and distributing a methodology for work to combat racism that aims to quality-assure how public sector activities treat the public. The target group is people who work with operational development, primarily at the management and strategy level. The Living History Forum's efforts to promote the use of knowledge about racism in various activities is to be strengthened.

Awareness-raising initiatives to combat various forms of racism

In order to meet the need for more knowledge about various forms of racism in public sector activities, and also to improve the conditions for young people's circumstances and needs being considered in this work, a number of measures are being implemented. Since 2022, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) has been implementing efforts to prevent and combat antigypsyism and racism against the Sami. For example, the Agency has a task to strengthen the conditions for young Roma to implement interventions themselves that can help to increase knowledge and the visibility of young Roma, and their exposure to antigypsyism. Another task includes efforts to provide municipalities and regions with more knowledge about the Sami people, their living conditions, culture and history, and their rights as indigenous peoples, with a focus on combating racism and prejudice among young people.

In recent years, a number of reports have shown how people are affected by anti-Muslim racism in their everyday lives, including in the form of discrimination and hate crime. More knowledge of people's exposure to anti-Muslim racism in public sector activities, along with tools for dialogue with

faith communities and other civil society organisations, can create the conditions for increased mutual trust, and prevent and combat racism and discrimination. Therefore, in cooperation with MUCF, the Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities is to implement awareness-raising efforts aimed at preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism.

Knowledge support for the health care system

The evidence presented in recent years shows that there may be challenges concerning racism in many parts of the health care system. The National Board of Health and Welfare has prepared a needs analysis as part of its remit to develop and disseminate knowledge support to combat the incidence of racism and to promote the equal rights and opportunities of all in the health care system. This analysis shows that there is a need for awareness-raising efforts concerning racism, its various forms and its consequences, but also support and tools to develop and change ways of working or behaviours, and to monitor and evaluate interventions in the area. Among other things, the National Board of Health and Welfare highlights measures to prevent and combat racism targeting patients and their relatives, and racism targeting health care staff. Based on this analysis, the Board has developed training material entitled *Rasism och bemötande i vården* (Racism and treatment in the health care system). The material mainly highlights the staff's treatment of patients but also how colleagues treat each other, as well as patients' treatment of staff. The task has been extended to create better conditions for the target groups to learn from and utilise this knowledge support.

Awareness-raising efforts in social services

Research studies and other evidence-based knowledge shows that there may also be challenges related to treatment and interventions in parts of Sweden's social services. For example regarding people's experiences of the assessment of, and decisions on, cases concerning children, custody and contact reports as well as social assistance. People who have been in contact with social services can perceive that the assessments and decisions are influenced by officials' perceptions and negative ideas about a particular religion or notions about the culture of caregiving in non-European countries. The extensive disinformation campaign that targeted social services, among others, in 2022 could contribute to such notions gaining a foothold in the population. Since then, the National Board of Health and Welfare has been tasked with conducting regular dialogues with relevant civil

society organisations, faith communities and other actors regarding the work with children, young people and families to counter the spread of rumours and disinformation. In addition, there is a need for awareness-raising initiatives targeting employees in social services. These initiatives should utilise evidence-based knowledge about how racist notions could be manifested in different parts of social services.

Law enforcement activities

According to Swedish law, police operations based on a person's appearance being perceived as foreign, or based on the person's name and language, may never constitute grounds for the State to take law enforcement measures against that person. The above-mentioned report from Brå on ethnic profiling from 2023 shows that few of the interviewed group managers have read the Swedish Police Authority's strategy for culture and equal treatment. The report also contains a number of proposals on how the Swedish Police Authority, through guides or guidelines, deeper knowledge of discrimination, regular dialogue with civil society organisations and continuous monitoring, can continue to work on these issues.

Supervision by the Equality Ombudsman

The Equality Ombudsman supervises compliance with the Discrimination Act and receives complaints of discrimination from individuals. The prohibition of discrimination covers social services, the health care system, and treatment in public sector activities. Complaints concerning social services and treatment in public sector activities have increased in the period 2021–2023. Ethnicity is the most common basis for complaint in the area of public sector activities. The Equality Ombudsman investigates more complaints and is pursuing more cases in the courts than in previous years, which has created the conditions for more individuals than previously to obtain redress.

Increased protection against discrimination

Today there is a limited prohibition of discrimination in Chapter 2, Section 17 of the Discrimination Act concerning certain government agencies. Under this provision, the prohibition covers the public servant's treatment of the public. Thus, it does not cover the measures that the public servant takes, or fails to take, in relation to the public.

This means that, according to the current legislation, individuals have weaker protection against discrimination in their contacts with some government agencies compared to others. If, for example, a police officer or customs official uses discriminatory language in connection with providing advice or in their contact with the public, this is covered by the prohibition. However, measures taken by a police officer or customs official in relation to an individual are not covered by the current prohibition.

The report *Bättre skydd mot diskriminering (SOU 2021:94)* (Better protection against discrimination) proposes amending the Discrimination Act to expand the prohibition of discrimination in certain public sector activities to also include different kinds of measures, as well the failure to take measures.

In light of this, the Government takes the view that there is a need to draft a legislative proposal on expanded protection against discrimination in public sector activities.

Measures

- The Living History Forum has a task to provide continuing professional development and awareness-raising initiatives concerning various historical and contemporary forms of racism to school staff and other relevant public sector occupational groups.
- The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has a task to carry out interventions intended to help prevent and to combat antigypsyism. This work is to include strengthening the conditions for young Roma to implement interventions themselves that can help to increase awareness and the visibility of young Roma, and their exposure to antigypsyism. The Government will consider the need for further measures based on the final report on the task.
- The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has a task to implement interventions intended to help prevent and to combat racism against the Sami. These interventions are intended to provide municipalities and regions with better conditions to prevent and combat racism against the Sami, for example by increasing awareness of the Sami people, their living conditions, culture and history, and their rights as indigenous peoples. The focus is to be on combating racism and prejudice among young people. The Government will consider the need for further measures based on the final report on the remit.

- In cooperation with MUCF, the Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities is tasked with implementing awareness-raising initiatives aimed at preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism. The task includes developing and disseminating a guide addressed to municipalities in Sweden in order to increase awareness about people's exposure to hostility toward Muslims. In addition, the guide is to provide support to municipalities on questions of dialogue with Muslim faith communities and other civil society organisations concerning people's exposure to racism because they are, or are perceived to be, Muslims.
- The National Board of Health and Welfare is tasked with disseminating knowledge support to combat the incidence of racism and to promote equal rights and opportunities for all in the health care system, thereby contributing to equality of care. The task includes reporting on the extent to which the knowledge support has been shared with the target group and, as far as possible, how well it has been put into practice in the everyday work of health care staff.
- The National Board of Health and Welfare is tasked with supporting the implementation of awareness-raising interventions to combat racism in health care, dental care and social services. The task includes compiling knowledge about how racist notions are manifested and how they affect the staff, patients and users in health care, dental care and social services. Where deemed appropriate, the awareness-raising interventions are to be implemented adjusted to work at an operational level based on the current state of knowledge.
- The Government intends to draft a legislative proposal on expanded protection against discrimination in public sector activities.

5.5 Working life

Racism and discrimination must not affect people's opportunities to obtain gainful employment or a good work environment and good working conditions. The sub-objective of the *Working life* focus area is:

Employers, elected representatives and other actors in the labour market have acquired better knowledge, skills and ways of working to prevent and combat racism and discrimination in working life.

Specifically identified government agencies: The Swedish Work Environment Authority and Equality Ombudsman.

According to the Discrimination Act (2008:567), all employers must work preventively to combat discrimination and in other ways work for equal rights and opportunities regardless of, for example, ethnicity, religion or other belief. According to the Swedish Work Environment Authority's regulations on Systematic Work Environment Management (AFS 2001:1Eng) and Organisational and social work environment (AFS 2015:4Eng), the employer is responsible for preventing victimisation. According to the Equality Ombudsman's 2023 Annual Report, most of the complaints concerning working life deal with discrimination related to ethnicity. Discrimination occurs in connection with recruitment but also in workplaces in the form of harassment or through the employer disadvantaging individuals in the management and allocation of work tasks. All in all, this presents a picture of a need for efforts to ensure compliance with the current legislation, and for increased awareness of how racism and discrimination risk affecting people's working lives.

The following section sets out the more specific needs and ongoing efforts to assist employers, elected representatives and other actors in the labour market to gain better knowledge, skills and ways of working to combat racism and discrimination in working life.

Employers' efforts to combat discrimination

Compliance with the provisions on active measures is important if they are to be an effective means of achieving equal rights and opportunities in practice in areas such as working life. Previous inquiries have shown that employers would like to see a significantly higher degree of support in their work so that they know what is required of them to comply with the provisions in the Act (*Effektivare tillsyn över diskrimineringslagen – aktiva åtgärder och det skollagsreglerade området* SOU 2020:79 [More effective supervision of the Discrimination Act – Active measures and area regulated by the Education Act]). The Equality Ombudsman is therefore tasked with developing and disseminating knowledge support in this area to strengthen employers' work to combat discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity and religion.

Victimisation in the workplace

The Swedish Work Environment Authority is tasked with ensuring that the work environment meets the requirements in the Work Environment Act – that everyone should have a good work environment that provides opportunities for development. The Authority's evaluations of the regulations on

systematic work environment management and the organisational and social work environment showed that many employees and other actors find it difficult to deal with questions related to victimisation. The fact that these regulations coexist with the rules in the Discrimination Act also contributes to making it unclear how victimisation should be handled in the workplace. Actors would like to see more and better tools for investigating the organisational and social work environment. In its work to improve the conditions for employers to comply with the regulations on systematic work environment management, the Swedish Work Environment Authority will implement awareness-raising initiatives to promote the work to prevent and combat racism in the work environment. The collaboration that has been initiated between the Swedish Work Environment Authority and the Equality Ombudsman is vital for employers to gain a better understanding of their obligations arising from the Discrimination Act and the Work Environment Act, and to acquire knowledge about how they can work to combat various forms of victimisation in the workplace.

Greater awareness of work-related ill-health in the work against racism

Greater awareness and cognizance of how being subjected to racism can lead to work-related ill-health is important for initiating relevant preventive measures, and for the individuals affected to be able to get the support they need. The Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise has therefore been tasked with gathering and compiling knowledge about the links between the victimisation of certain groups in the workplace and work-related stress. A particular focus should be knowledge about the work environment and the impact of victimisation on the grounds of ethnicity, skin colour and religion or other belief on the individual's health. The task also includes disseminating the results from the knowledge gathered so that it can provide support for employers, occupational health and safety representatives, and other elected representatives at workplaces in their systematic work environment management.

Knowledge of AI is important for combating discrimination

Employers are increasingly using AI and automated decision-making, although they are not always aware of which of these technologies they are using. This is noted by the Equality Ombudsman in its report *AI och risker för diskriminering i arbetslivet (2023)* (AI and risks of discrimination in the workplace). The report also shows that AI and other automated decision-making entail risks of discrimination, and that currently employers are only

partially aware of these risks. This means that a need for a higher level of competence concerning when employers are using AI and other automated decision-making, and how the risks of discrimination can be prevented. The Equality Ombudsman notes that it needs to monitor the issue in order to help prevent discrimination.

Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (the AI Regulation) entered into force on 1 August 2024 and aims to protect people's fundamental rights. Article 77 provides that there must be publicly available information about the national public authorities or bodies which have the power to protect fundamental rights, including the right to non-discrimination. The Government has appointed an inquiry to review the need for national alignment with the AI Regulation.

Measures

- The Equality Ombudsman is tasked with taking special measures to strengthen employers' prevention and promotion work to combat discrimination and in other ways promote equal rights and opportunities, regardless of ethnicity and religion. The task includes reviewing employers' work to prevent discrimination and for equal rights and opportunities (termed 'active measures') and to produce and disseminate knowledge support in the area for employers, for example in the form of a guide.
- The Swedish Work Environment Authority is tasked with carrying out awareness-raising initiatives to promote work to prevent and combat racism in the work environment. These initiatives are to help increase knowledge among employers and other relevant actors about the requirements in the Work Environment Act (1977:1160) on preventing victimisation, with a particular focus on degrading treatment with racist overtones.
- The Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise is to gather and compile knowledge about the connection between the victimisation of certain groups and work-related stress. A particular focus should be knowledge about the work environment and the impact of victimisation on the grounds of ethnicity, skin colour and religion or other belief on the individual's health. In that this task has been expanded, the Agency is to create the conditions for the knowledge produced to be actually utilised in practice.

6. Monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan

Monitoring and indicators

The Living History Forum is responsible for monitoring work under the Action Plan. This means that until 2029, The Living History Forum is to compile the results of the work in an annual progress report to the Government. To this end, The Living History Forum is tasked with developing a system for monitoring this work that includes indicators to enable analysis of the results in relation to the objective and sub-objectives in the Action Plan.

In monitoring progress in the implementation of the Action Plan, dialogue with relevant civil society organisations, as well as with the government agencies identified as specifically important for the work in each of the Action Plan's four focus areas, is of great importance. Besides The Living History Forum, these government agencies are the Equality Ombudsman, Swedish National Agency for Education, Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, Swedish Police Authority, National Board of Health and Welfare, and Swedish Work Environment Authority. The progress report is to be based on reports and inputs from these and other government agencies carrying out work within the framework of the Action Plan.

Evaluation

The Government intends to evaluate all of the work done under the Action Plan and its objectives in five years' time. This evaluation will be an important complement to the final report on the work by The Living History Forum. It will also serve as a basis for assessing how further work should be carried out and whether the Action Plan is an effective tool for achieving the overall objective of a society free from racism.

- The Living History Forum is responsible for coordinating and monitoring the work under the Action Plan. This includes developing a system for monitoring this work that includes indicators to enable analysis of the results of this work in relation to the objectives in the Action Plan. The final report on the Action Plan will be submitted in 2029.
- The Government intends to commission an external evaluation of the work in total with the Action Plan in five years.