



Article from Ministry of Employment

# The Istanbul Convention is an important tool in efforts to stop men's violence against women

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On 11 May 2021, the Swedish Government will join the international celebrations to mark the 10th anniversary of the Istanbul Convention. The Istanbul Convention is the informal name of the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

“Men's violence against women affects women and girls around the world and here at home in Sweden. It affects individuals and the society as a whole. This violence prevents the enjoyment of human rights, gender equality, development and freedom. The Swedish Government is therefore working to encourage more countries to ratify the Istanbul Convention,” says Minister for Gender Equality and Housing Märta Stenevi.

## A historical document

The Istanbul Convention recognises violence against women as a violation of human rights. It condemns all forms of violence against women and describes this violence as an expression of a historical imbalance of power between women and men. When the Convention was open for signature in 2011, it was the most comprehensive human rights convention in its field and the first legally binding regional instrument on violence against women in Europe. All countries that have ratified the Istanbul Convention must adopt legislation on matters such as rape, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, honour-based violence and oppression and forced marriage.

“The Istanbul Convention can have a real impact in the countries that ratify it. It represents an important basis for Sweden’s efforts to prevent and combat men’s violence against women, and is a key component in the Government’s national strategy in these efforts,” says Ms Stenevi.

The Government has tasked the Swedish Gender Equality Agency with disseminating information about the Istanbul Convention in Sweden. The mandate instructs the Agency to spread awareness among municipalities, regions and relevant government agencies about the Council of Europe’s recommendations concerning Sweden’s compliance with the Istanbul Convention.

## Monitoring compliance with the Convention in Sweden

Ratification of the Convention brings with it obligations to comply with the Convention’s requirements concerning prevention, protection, prosecution and coordinated policies in the efforts to combat men’s violence against women. In September 2017, the Government submitted a report on Swedish conditions and initiatives to comply with the Istanbul Convention to the Council of Europe’s Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO).

GREVIO’s 2019 evaluation report points out the advantage of Sweden considering violence against women to be a fundamental challenge for gender equality and holds Sweden up as a leading country in gender equality policy. GREVIO presents a total of 41 recommendations to Sweden on further improvements they consider necessary. The Government has until January 2022 to report on how the recommendations have been dealt with in Sweden.



Article from Ministry of Employment

# Gender equality initiatives in the Spring Budget for 2021

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The Government has proposed gender equality initiatives in the Spring Budget for 2021. The proposal is based on an agreement between the government parties, the Centre Party and the Liberal Party.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about serious consequences for lives and health. The crisis facing Sweden and the entire world is without parallel in modern times. At the same time, there are other problems lingering in the shadow of the crisis, such as unemployment, exposure to violence and other types of vulnerability, where children and adults who are already at risk suffer greatly. The Government therefore proposes a series of initiatives focused on supporting people subjected to violence and children in vulnerable situations.

## Civil society important for children in vulnerable situations and people subjected to violence

Voluntary organisations carry out vital activities during the COVID-19 pandemic while at the same time suffering greatly from the crisis and its economic consequences. The Government proposes allocating an additional SEK 90 million in 2021 to organisations working with children in vulnerable situations and with women, children and LGBTIQ people who are victims of violence; it will also go to organisations working to end men's violence against women, domestic violence and honour-related violence and oppression

The aim of the funding is to support these organisations, which are forced to adapt or enhance their support activities to meet increasing or changing

needs due to the pandemic. The proposed aid is a continuation of an earlier initiative.

In addition to the initiative for children at risk and people subjected to violence, the Government also proposes allocating SEK 50 million to strengthen civil society's social and humanitarian activities for society's most vulnerable people.

## More resources for work against violence and oppression

The Government proposes allocating SEK 37 million to initiatives to strengthen work against men's violence against women, domestic violence, prostitution and human trafficking. Additional support to young people at risk of domestic violence is also proposed.

## Preventive action is important – the violence must stop

The pandemic brings into focus the need for improved preventive action aimed at preventing violence from occurring or recurring, and protecting and supporting those at risk. The Government sees a need for early preventive action. This pertains to young people and older people alike, with the aim of stopping violence from occurring or recurring. The Government recently presented the Government Bill 'Prevention of domestic violence' Prop. 2020/21:163 to the Riksdag. Funds are now being allocated to governmental agencies to support preventive action at municipal level.

Detecting violence at an early stage and modifying the behaviour of those who subject or have subjected a close relative to violence or abuse are important steps in preventing domestic violence. For this reason, funding will go to activities such as the Välj att sluta (Choose to Stop) telephone helpline, which is intended for people who want to change a violent behaviour in a close relationship.

## Increased vulnerability in prostitution and human trafficking

Vulnerability in prostitution and human trafficking has increased during the pandemic and it is important to strengthen preventive action and support

initiatives to provide at-risk people the protection and support they need and are entitled to. With additional resources, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency can strengthen the initiatives within the framework of its national coordination remit to combat all forms of human trafficking and provide additional skills support to professionals. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency co-finances the regional coordinators in social services working to fight prostitution and human trafficking. They conduct outreach and give support to vulnerable people.



Article from Ministry of Employment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

# Sweden pushes for economic justice and rights

Published 12 March 2021

On 8 March, International Women’s Day, a stakeholder meeting was held at which Minister for Gender Equality Märta Stenevi and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde met with more than 40 civil society organisations to get input for Sweden’s engagement in a global action coalition on economic gender equality.

The global action coalition on economic gender equality is one of six action coalitions that will promote gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights as part of the Generation Equality Forum. This initiative was launched by UN Women together with various gender champions with the aim of fulfilling the international commitments made under the Beijing Platform for Action.

“As early as the UN Conference on Women, in Beijing in 1995, Hillary Clinton made the famous statement that ‘human rights are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights’. This is self-evident, but even so it is still far from being realised,” says Minister Stenevi, and continues:

“In this action coalition, Sweden will contribute with its experience from working with economic and social reforms and gender equality policy. We will highlight issues such as individual taxation, parental leave, childcare reforms and gender-transformative budgeting. But above all, we will learn from other stakeholders and strengthen one another in our work – this is why the stakeholders meeting with civil society is so important.”

Sweden shares the leadership of the action coalition with South Africa, Mexico, Spain and Germany, the OECD, the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the civil society

organisations Care International, FEMNET, the Huairou Commission, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Women's Working Group on Financing for Development. Sweden's priorities in the action coalition are efforts for economic and social reforms for gender equality, efforts against discriminatory legislation, a gender-equal labour market including promoting the initiative Global Deal, and a feminist trade policy.

“To strengthen economic gender equality, women and girls must have greater access to economic resources, work and education. The majority of the world's poorest are women, and this has increased during the pandemic. That's why extensive reforms for economic gender equality are needed, as are enhanced efforts to combat discriminatory legislation and norms that obstruct women's and girls' access to resources. Only then can we achieve the global goals on gender equality,” says Minister Linde.

The action coalition's action plan for economic gender equality will be discussed at the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico City, to be held on 29–31 March 2021. The action plan will later be launched globally at the follow-up Generation Equality Forum in Paris, to be held on 30 June–2 July at which President Emmanuel Macron will be the host.



Article from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Employment

# The Government's gender equality work is more important than ever

Published 08 March 2021

Sweden has the first feminist Government in the world. Gender equality is central to the Government's priorities – in decision-making and resource allocation. The Government's gender equality work is based on six objectives. It addresses power and influence, gender equality in economy and education, and the equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care. It is also about gender equality in health and ending men's violence against women. In brief, it is about gender equality in all facets of life and society.

- Women and men must have the same power to shape society and their own lives – this is the primary goal of our feminist Government. This means that the work of all the ministers in my Government will contribute to the development and implementation of gender equality policy, says Prime Minister Stefan Löfven.

- Sweden is one of the most gender-equal countries in the world – but we can never take this for granted. We must continue to fight so that every woman can live a life in security, free from violence and oppression. We must do more to reduce the gender gap in lifetime earnings. I am proud to be involved in this work in a feminist Government, where all ministers are responsible for promoting gender equality, says Minister for Gender Equality and Housing Märta Stenevi.



Article from Ministry of Employment

# Measures against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime

Published 01 March 2021

The Government has adopted several measures against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime. Several of the measures are being carried out within the context of the national plan against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime, which the Government adopted in 2016. The plan takes an integrated approach and comprises strategies and measures to prevent and combat racism and hate crime through improved coordination and monitoring, more education and research, increased support to and deepened dialogue with civil society, strengthened preventive measures online and a more active justice system.

Below are examples of measures:

## Improved coordination and follow-up

The Living History Forum is responsible for coordination and follow-up of the work on the plan against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime and presents a comprehensive report to the Government annually.

## More education, knowledge and research

The Government has instructed the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden to – based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – produce and compile knowledge about children's and young people's vulnerability to

racism.

The Government has instructed the county administrative boards to advance the work against racism in the labour market. In doing this work, the county administrative boards are to increase knowledge and awareness among stakeholders in the labour market about racism, with a focus on Afrophobia.

The Living History Forum carries out major education initiatives on different forms of racism throughout history and in the present day. It offers education and training for school staff and other public sector employees, with a focus on quality-assuring public sector services to the general public through work against racism.

The Living History Forum has been instructed to develop and implement skills development initiatives for public sector employees on equal treatment regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

The Government has instructed the Living History Forum to survey people's experience of racism in contacts with Swedish government agencies and other public sector services at national, regional and local level.

The Stockholm County Administrative Board has been tasked with increasing knowledge about how Roma children and young people are subjected to antigypsyism in the present day.

The Government has provided the Sami Parliament with funding to conduct a consensus-seeking process among the Sami people ahead of the establishment of a truth commission.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has been tasked with implementing measures for an open and inclusive environment in schools for young LGBTIQ people.

The Swedish Research Council has announced special funds for research on racism.

The Government has allocated funds to support remembrance trips to Holocaust memorial sites in 2018–2022.

On 13–14 October 2021, Sweden will host the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism and other forms of racism. The Forum will focus on issues concerning remembrance, Holocaust education, antisemitism in social media, and measures against antisemitism.

In connection with the Forum, the Government is conducting a national initiative to increase knowledge in schools and wider society.

The initiative consists of the following four assignments:

1. The Living History Forum will implement a national initiative to enhance educational initiatives about the Holocaust, antisemitism, antigypsyism and other forms of racism, to particularly target audiences that are rarely reached by the Forum's activities. Various parts of the school and liberal adult education systems are to be the focus of the initiatives. Civic orientation for newly arrived immigrants is also included in the assignment.
2. The National Historical Museums are to develop a Swedish-language version of the Dimensions in Testimony installation (developed by the Shoah Foundation) that allows visitors to converse with Holocaust survivors via pre-recorded answers to questions, made possible by artificial intelligence technology.
3. The University of Gothenburg (the Segerstedt Institute) is to prepare a research review and conduct a research seminar on education in the school system that can combat antisemitism and other forms of racism.
4. The Swedish Defence Research Agency is to produce a report on antisemitism in social media and other digital environments.

## Strengthened preventive efforts online

The Swedish Media Council has run a campaign to combat racism on the internet – the No Hate Speech Movement – targeting children and young people.

The Swedish Defence Research Agency has been tasked with analysing violent extremist propaganda in digital environments.

## More active judicial system

The Swedish Police Authority has raised its level of ambition with respect to hate crime. A national contact point for hate crime issues is now in place, as are democracy and anti-hate crime groups in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö.

The Government has instructed the Swedish Police Authority to continue

measures against racism, hate crime and other crimes that threaten democracy.

The Swedish Police Authority has also been tasked with reporting on the results of measures taken to combat hate crime and other crimes that threaten democracy. The Swedish Police Authority is to describe how cooperation with government agencies and organisations is conducted and how a functioning dialogue is ensured with regard to groups subjected to this type of crime.

The Swedish Prosecution Authority has taken measures to enhance the quality of its work to combat hate crime.

On the instructions of the Government, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention has conducted an in-depth study of antisemitic hate crime in Sweden and is now conducting an equivalent study into Islamophobic and Afrophobic hate crime respectively.

The Swedish Center for Preventing Violent Extremism has been part of the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention since 2018. The Center's mandate includes giving needs-based support to local actors, serving as a knowledge hub and contributing to creating greater effectiveness and coordination in preventive measures.

The Government has appointed an all-party committee to consider the introduction of specific criminal liability for participation in a racist organisation and a ban on racist organisations.

## **Increased support to and deepened dialogue with civil society**

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society distributes annual funding in accordance with the Ordinance on government grants to activities combating racism and similar forms of intolerance.

The Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities has been tasked with increasing knowledge about security for mosques and Muslim communities as well as about the vulnerability of stakeholders to Islamophobia and hate crime.

The appropriations to security-enhancing measures for civil society were increased from 2018.





Article from Ministry of Employment

# Märta Stenevi took part in informal video conference on the EU's post-pandemic recovery

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On 22 February, Minister for Gender Equality and Housing Märta Stenevi took part in an informal video conference between EU employment, social affairs and gender equality ministers. Ms Stenevi participated in a discussion on the link between gender equality and the EU's post-pandemic recovery.

Ms Stenevi raised issues such as differences in the employment rate between women and men and how it has been affected by the pandemic. Women have been more severely impacted by the pandemic than men. There are also differences in the employment rate between foreign born women and women born in Sweden.

“When we plan the measures for the EU's post-pandemic recovery, we must not only look at the differences between women and men, but also specifically at foreign born women and their conditions for returning to work,” says Ms Stenevi.

The purpose of the informal video conference was to provide input to the European Commission's action plan to implement the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The European Pillar of Social Rights consists of 20 principles which, among other things, address gender equality and equal opportunities in the labour market, fair working conditions and social protection and inclusion. During the spring, Council conclusions are also expected on the pandemic's impact on gender equality.