



Mid-term report from Sweden within the framework of the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review

Introduction

This report presents an overview of measures taken to date in order to comply with the recommendations Sweden received and accepted as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) conducted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2020. The report reflects the situation as of 24 August 2022.

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In January 2020, the UN Human Rights Council reviewed Sweden within the framework of the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. There is no formal requirement to present a mid-term report to the Human Rights Council or the Member States during a review cycle. However, compliance with the recommendations that Sweden accepted within the framework of the Universal Periodic Review is a high priority for the Swedish Government. Sweden therefore submits a mid-term report also during this cycle, as it did in the first and second cycles. In accordance with the UPR rules and procedures, Sweden will submit a national report within the framework of the fourth cycle.

In this mid-term report, the Government provides general information on the measures it has taken since January 2020 regarding the issues on which Sweden received the most recommendations. Among these, this report focuses on the issues linked to the accepted recommendations. These concern the establishment of a national human rights institute, measures to

combat discrimination, racism, hate crime and men's violence against women as well as measures to promote gender equality and human rights for indigenous peoples and persons belonging to national minorities. Responses to the recommendations were submitted in June 2020 and are also attached to this report.

A national human rights institute

Sweden received several recommendations on establishing an independent national human rights institute.

On 1 January 2022, the Institute for Human Rights was launched. Under the Act on the Institute for Human Rights (2021:642), the Institute is tasked with promoting the safeguarding of human rights in Sweden based on legally binding sources. Under the Act, the Institute monitors, investigates and reports on how human rights are respected and implemented in Sweden. The institute is also Sweden's independent national mechanism to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Measures to combat discrimination, racism and hate crime

Sweden received several recommendations on strengthening protection against discrimination through action such as strengthened legislation and measures against different forms of racism and hate crime.

In December 2020, the Inquiry on certain provisions in the Discrimination Act submitted an interim report (SOU 2020:79) with proposals that aim for more effective supervision of the provisions on active measures in the Discrimination Act (2008:567). Furthermore, it also submitted proposals on how supervisory responsibility for areas subject to the Education Act can be transferred from the Equality Ombudsman to the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. The proposals have been circulated for consultation. In October 2020, the inquiry was tasked through supplementary terms of reference with considering how protection against discrimination could change in certain public sector operations to ensure that the protection in question is as comprehensive as possible. Furthermore, it should consider whether further measures are needed to strengthen protection against discrimination in cases where there is no one single injured party, and assess whether there is a need for further measures to protect employees who are discriminated, harassed and threatened by non-employees in the workplace.

In December 2021, the inquiry submitted its final report (SOU 2021:94), which contains proposals on strengthened protection against discrimination. The proposals have been circulated for consultation.

In 2020, the Government tasked the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning with analysing and assessing whether unfair treatment that may constitute discrimination occurs in housing provision. The same year, the Government approved grants for two local anti-discrimination offices to implement the project 'Barnets bästa i fokus' ('Focus on the best interests of the child'). The project concerned strengthening action against discrimination affecting children and young people, and it gave more children and young people tailored advice and support.

The Riksdag has approved additional permanent funds to acknowledge particular challenges and needs in anti-racism efforts. This creates conditions for vigorous and long-term efforts. Using dialogue with civil society and the national plan against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime as a springboard, special action programmes have been developed to combat antisemitism, antigypsyism, islamophobia, afrophobia and racism against the Sami. These plans, which will be implemented in 2022–2024, will contribute to increasing knowledge of and combating these specific forms of racism. The action programmes include, inter alia, enhanced efforts in the area of education, expanded efforts by the police to combat racism and hate crime, and mapping racism online.

In September 2021, the Swedish Police Authority was tasked with continuing to develop and improve efforts to combat hate crime and other crimes that threaten democracy. The first interim report was submitted in March 2022 and describes the Authority's activities in the area. The second interim report, which is due in March 2023, will include a short- and long-term plan. The final report, which is due in December 2023, will present the measures the Authority has taken and a long-term plan for its continued efforts. Each police region has specifically tasked and trained investigators. The regions Stockholm, Syd (South) and Väst (West) have specialist groups. At national level there are two operational developers and a cybercrime specialist.

Measures to combat men's violence against women and promote gender equality

Sweden received several recommendations on promoting gender equality, for example regarding income, and on combating violence against women.

In December 2021, the Government presented an action plan to prevent and combat men's violence against women in 2021–2023. It consisted of 99 measures divided into the four objectives of the national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women. Resources for the County administrative boards' activities to combat men's violence against women have been made permanent as of 2021, in order to strengthen long-term conditions for supporting the implementation of the national strategy in the counties. Long-term actions has been undertaken to prevent honour-related violence and oppression. Violence and relapse prevention activities have been strengthened – in August 2021, a provision was added to the Social Services Act to the effect that it is a responsibility of the social welfare boards to promote persons to cease being violent.

The Swedish Public Employment Service, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, the Swedish Migration Agency and the National Board of Health and Welfare have a joint mission to work for improved detection of violence in certain client groups in 2019–2021. In 2020, awareness-raising measures were implemented to ensure that public authority staff who meet those subjected to violence and perpetrators of violence know when and how to ask questions, and how they should act when they become aware of violence.

In 2021, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency was tasked with strengthening its preventative work and implementing initiatives to ensure protection and support for vulnerable individuals in prostitution and human trafficking

On 1 July 2021, a new offence was introduced – violation of a child's integrity – to strengthen the protection provided under criminal law to children who witness domestic violence. The crime means that it is now a punishable offence to expose a child to witness certain criminal acts, such as assault, in a domestic relation.

The Swedish Expert Team against honour-related violence and oppression at the County Administrative Board of Östergötland has been tasked with

coordinating joint efforts by public authorities to promote the application of the new provisions on honour-related offences that entered into force on 1 July 2020, including the introduction of a specific child marriage offence. On 1 June 2022 a new offence, honour-based oppression, entered into force. The offence means that a particularly stricter penalty scale has been introduced for those who repeatedly commit certain criminal acts against a person with an honour motive.

The gender equality policy objectives are overarching and long-term, and gender mainstreaming is the Government's strategy to meet these objectives.

In 2020, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency distributed some SEK 35 million in state aid to gender equality projects and women's organisation.

In 2022, the commission for gender-equal lifetime earnings submitted the report 'Minska gapet – Åtgärder för jämställda livsinkomster' ('Reducing the gap – measures to ensure gender-equal lifetime earnings') (SOU 2022:4) to the Government. The report contains both a survey on how support measures are distributed between women and men and an overview of authorities' information and guidance from a gender perspective. Lastly, a number of proposals aimed at increasing long-term economic equality in Sweden are made.

In 2021, Statistics Sweden was tasked by the Government with conducting a survey (which has been carried out every ten years since 1990) analysing the distribution of unpaid household work between women and men.

In 2018–2020, the Government entered into an agreement with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions on gender equality and protecting women against violence, which resulted in the association being able to strengthen its work to ensure that the common national system for health care knowledge management includes gender-related issues in connection with patient safety, health care quality, access and treatment.

Measures to promote the rights of indigenous peoples and persons belonging to national minorities

Sweden received several recommendations on taking measures to promote the rights of the indigenous Sami people and persons belonging to the

various national minorities for example in relation to the right to non-discrimination and land rights.

To strengthen the national minority languages, the Government has substantially increased its support by SEK 90 million annually for 2022–2024. This means that the Government will develop an action programme to preserve the national minority languages, establish language centres for Finnish, Yiddish, Meänkieli and Romany chib, and develop the existing Sami language centre. The Government also has increased its grants to organisations that represent the national minorities, including the Sami.

The Government continues to carry out activities to implement the strategy for Roma inclusion. The overall objective of the strategy (Govt Communication 2011/12:56) is that Roma who turn 20 years of age in 2032 will have the same opportunities in life as non-Roma. The strategy takes various rights under international human rights agreements as its starting point. The strategy's thematic areas are: housing, work, education, health and social care, and civil organisation.

The Yiddish and Romani chib language centres and the strengthened strategy for Roma inclusion were part of Sweden's pledges that were presented at Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism in October 2021.

On 19 March 2020, the Government appointed a truth and reconciliation committee for Tornedalians, Kvens and Lantalaïset. The truth and reconciliation committee will investigate violations and abuses against Tornedalians, Kvens and Lantalaïset as a result of the assimilation policies of the 19th and 20th centuries. The results of the Committee's work will be used to develop Swedish minority policy. The committee will submit its final report on 15 May 2023.

On 3 November 2021 the Government appointed a truth committee with a broad mandate to survey and review the policy pursued regarding the Sami people. The Government will increase the knowledge about abuses, violations and racism committed against the Sami people as well as the assimilation policies resulting in the loss of language, culture and identity.

On 27 January 2022, the Riksdag adopted the Government Bill on a consultation act for the Sami (2021/22:19). The bill proposes to introduce a

new system of consultation in matters of particular significance to the Sami. The purpose of consultation is to promote Sami influence over matters that affect them . Under the proposal, the Government, government administrative agencies and – when an amendment to the Act comes into effect on 1 March 2024 – regions and municipalities, are obligated to consult the Sami Parliament before making decisions on matters that may be of particular significance to the Sami.