



Information on Sweden's interim follow-up of recommendations in ECRI's Report on Sweden (fifth monitoring cycle)

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has requested Sweden to provide information on the follow-up regarding the following two recommendations:

1. ECRI recommends that adequate powers and expertise to investigate discrimination by all public authorities, including law enforcement agencies, be vested in the Ombuds institutions. Furthermore, ECRI encourages the Parliamentary Ombudsman to work in consultation with the Equality Ombudsman in these cases.
2. ECRI recommends that the authorities review the Introduction Programme for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection with the aim of strengthening it and achieving higher success rates in labour market participation, paying particular attention to addressing the specific needs of women.

Sweden therefore wishes to provide the following information.

The first recommendation

The Equality Ombudsman has a broad mandate that includes the task of supervising compliance with the Discrimination Act (2008:567). 'Supervision' in this context means an independent review aimed at verifying that the activities reviewed fulfil the requirements that ensue from the Discrimination Act. A review may be undertaken on the basis of complaints received from individuals or on the Equality Ombudsman's own initiative.

Pursuant to the Act concerning the Equality Ombudsman (2008:568), Section 1, the Ombudsman shall work to ensure that discrimination associated with sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age does not occur in any areas of the life of society. The Equality Ombudsman can, among other things, propose legislative amendments or other anti-discrimination measures to the Government and initiate other appropriate measures (Section 3). Furthermore, antidiscrimination agencies receive grants under the Ordinance on government support to activities that prevent and counteract discrimination (2002:989).

The fight against discrimination is an ongoing process. The Government has appointed an inquiry to analyse whether the current provisions regarding supervision of 'active measures' are appropriate for effective compliance with the law. 'Active measures' are prevention and promotion measures aimed at preventing discrimination in working life and education.

The four Parliamentary Ombudsmen are appointed by the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) to review and monitor the implementation of laws and other regulations in the public sector. Their terms of reference are drawn up by the Riksdag, and an ombudsman's role is based on the trust that exists between that position and the Riksdag. The Parliamentary Ombudsmen are subordinate only to the Riksdag and consequently cannot be given instructions by the Government. However, the Government will forward the recommendation of the ECRI to the Riksdag and the Parliamentary Ombudsmen for their further consideration.

The second recommendation

The Government continuously monitors and follows up the work of the Swedish Public Employment Service, including the results of the Introduction Programme for newly arrived immigrants. One indicator is the share of participants leaving the Introduction Programme for employment or studies, measured 90 days after completing the Programme. In 2013, 20 per cent of the participants were in employment three months after completing the Programme. In 2019, that figure had increased to 33 per cent. Still, employment rates are significantly lower among foreign-born people than among the Swedish-born population.

The Swedish labour market is knowledge-intensive and highly productive, therefore the level of skills required to obtain a job is relatively high. To improve the results of the Introduction Programme, the Government has reformed its policies and implemented a number of measures to strengthen the integration of newly arrived immigrants into the labour market.

Evaluations of the Introduction Programme show that women are less likely than men to have access to, and benefit from, integration measures in the Introduction Programme. To address this, the Government has introduced a number of targeted measures for migrant women.

In 2020, the Government instructed the Swedish Public Employment Service to create activities to promote gender equality and to implement an enhanced gender equality perspective into all measures and services offered to newly arrived immigrants.

In addition, the Public Employment Service needs to ensure that it is giving women and men the same access to support, especially as regards newly arrived immigrants.

Funds have been allocated in the Budget Bill for the introduction of an intensive introduction year for newly arrived immigrants within the Introduction Programme. The intensive introduction year will consist of a chain of language intensive measures and vocationally oriented measures given in parallel or consecutively over a relatively short period of time. The goal is that the participants will find employment within one year after starting the intensive introduction year. A gender equality perspective should mainstream the intensive introduction year to ensure that both women and men have access to, and benefit from, the intensive introduction year.

In the Budget Bill for 2020, the Government presented an initiative on Swedish language courses for immigrants on parental leave. Longer periods of parental leave can prevent early and efficient integration into the labour market. In addition, interruption of ongoing language studies may lead to a regression in language development.

Another important measure for gender equality is the civic orientation course for newly arrived immigrants. It has now been improved and expanded (from at least 60 hours to at least 100 hours) with increased focus on gender equality and human rights.