



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Government Offices  
of Sweden

FACT SHEET

Ministry of Integration and  
Gender Equality

August 2009

# The Swedish Government's gender equality policy

The Swedish Government's gender equality policy has two principal aims: to combat and transform systems that preserve the gender-based distribution of power and resources in society, and to ensure that women and men enjoy the same power and opportunities to shape their own lives. When they share power and influence in all aspects of community life, the result is a more fair and democratic society. Gender equality also enhances economic growth by encouraging the development of people's skill and creativity.

## Policy aims and budget

The overall objective of Sweden's gender equality policy is to ensure that women and men have the same power to shape society and their own lives.

The policy focus is set out in four subgoals:

- Equal distribution of power and influence. Women and men shall have the same rights and opportunities to be active citizens and to shape the conditions for decision-making.
- Economic equality between the sexes. Women and men shall have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to education and paid work that provide them with the means to achieve lifelong economic independence.
- Equal distribution of unpaid care and household work. Women and men shall take the same responsibility for household work and have the same opportunities to give and receive care on equal terms.
- Men's violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys, shall have equal rights and opportunities in terms of physical integrity.

The Swedish Government has increased the resources available for gender equality policy measures. For the present term of office, 2007–2010, it has set aside SEK 400 million per year, which is more than ten times as high as the allocation for the previous term of office. As a result of this budget increase, gender equality policy can develop, become more vigorous and play a more active role. A gender equality perspective is to permeate all government policies. It is through action in such areas as education policy, employment policy and social policy that the means are created for achieving a society in which women and men are equal.

## Action plan for combating men's violence

In November 2007, the Government adopted an action plan (Govt. Comm. 2007/08:39) to combat men's violence against women, violence and oppression in the name of honour and violence in same-sex relations. Altogether, over SEK 900 million is being invested in 56 different measures up to the end of 2010.

The measures in the action plan are general in nature, but special steps are being taken to combat honour-related violence and oppression. The plan covers six areas of action, each of which is important in its own right but which also complement and reinforce one another.

These areas are:

- Greater protection and support to those exposed to violence
- Greater emphasis on preventive work
- Higher standards and greater efficiency in the judicial system
- Stronger measures targeting violent offenders
- Increased cooperation
- Improved knowledge

## Action plan to combat prostitution and human trafficking

In July 2008, the Government adopted an action plan (Govt. Comm. 2007/08:167) to combat prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes. A total of SEK 213 million is being invested in 36 measures up to the end of 2010.

The action plan focuses specifically on the exposed person's need of protection and support and states

that this aspect is to permeate government work at all levels. Special measures targeting children and young people are included. The plan covers six areas of action, each of which is important in its own right but which also complement and reinforce one another.

These areas are:

- Greater protection and support for those exposed to violence
- Greater emphasis on preventive work
- Higher standards and greater efficiency in the judicial system
- Increased national and international cooperation
- Improved knowledge

## **Gender equality strategy in the labour market**

During 2009, the Government has presented a strategy for gender equality in the labour market and in the business sector, in the form of a written communication to the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament). Based on a general, all-round perspective, the strategy seeks to coordinate and develop gender-equality measures targeting working life, business, education policy and social policy. The communication includes analyses and sets out policy aims and over 60 strategic measures. Among them are measures to combat violence in the labor market and issues concerning men and gender equality. A total of SEK 235 million are being invested.

## **SEK 300 million to women's entrepreneurship**

In May 2007, the Government adopted a three-year programme worth SEK 100 million per year to boost women's entrepreneurship and enhance knowledge and research in this area. The aim is for at least 40 per cent of new entrepreneurs to be women.

As an important part of this initiative, the Government has assigned the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Nutek) to undertake and coordinate a three-year programme for the enhancement of women's entrepreneurship. The overall objective of the programme is both increased business starts among women and increased growth among more companies run by women.

There are four sub-programmes:

- Information, advice and business development
- Specialised projects
- Development of financing opportunities
- Attitudes and role models

## **Research on women's entrepreneurship**

Research and Innovation for Sustainable Growth (Vinnova) has been allocated SEK 10 million per year for 2007–2009 to finance research on women's entrepreneurship. The aim is to intensify and update this area of research, with a view to make it easier for women to enter the business world and thereby boosting employment in the future.

Business statistics disaggregated by sex are only available to a limited extent. In June 2007, the Government tasked Statistics Sweden (SCB) with developing a database containing data on entrepreneurs and businesses in a gender perspective. This database will make it possible to analyse entrepreneurship among women and men from various angles, including sex, educational background, industry and number of employees etc.

## **Women's professional development**

In June 2008, the Government assigned the Swedish Administrative Development Agency (Verva) to manage and coordinate a programme for women's professional development in central government in order to boost the proportion of women employed as experts or managers. In 2009, this assignment was taken over by the Swedish Council for Strategic Human Resources Development. The aim is to increase the proportion of state-employed women with specialist skills or expertise or holding managerial positions. Such a development would have the additional advantage of helping to reduce pay gaps between women and men. A total of SEK 17 million is being invested in the programme, which will be the subject of a report to the Government Offices in March 2011.

## **SEK 110 million to promote gender equality in schools**

In June 2008, the Government presented a gender equality programme for Swedish schools, representing an investment of SEK 110 million. The programme includes the establishment of a special gender equality committee, further training courses for teachers, and measures both to enhance pupils' health and to attract greater numbers of male teachers.

The task of the gender equality committee is to enhance knowledge and awareness of gender equality in schools. The assignment also includes analysing gender differences in educational results, evaluating method and means of overcoming traditional gender roles, and recommending appropriate action. The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement

has been tasked with planning and implementing measures to promote gender equality both in compulsory schools and in similar educational forms, in upper secondary schools and in adult education.

The National Agency for Higher Education has been given the task of analysing gender differences in specialised study choices in teacher training, the reasons why more men than women choose to break off their studies in this training field, the proportion of men who work as teachers on completion of their training, and factors that influence women's and men's study choices in teacher training.

## **SEK 60 million to promote gender equality in higher education**

The Government appointed a committee in February 2009 to promote gender equality in Swedish higher education. The committee will have a budget of SEK 60 million at its disposal up to the end of 2010, and will target the entire higher education sector, i.e. state-run universities and colleges, private education providers authorised to award degrees, and organisations associated with such institutions.

The committee will focus in particular on combating gender-based subject choices and on reversing the trend towards fewer male students in higher education. It will also address gender differences in terms of study rate, dropout and propensity to complete a degree, of career opportunities in research, and of representation at executive level in higher education.

## **Gender mainstreaming**

In Sweden, gender mainstreaming is the principal strategy for achieving the national gender equality policy objectives. Gender mainstreaming means that decisions in all policy areas are to be permeated by a gender equality perspective. Since everyday decisions, the allocation of resources and the establishing of standards all affect gender equality, a gender perspective must be an integral part of day-to-day activities. The strategy has been developed as a means of combating the tendency to neglect gender equality issues or to consider them secondary to other political issues and activities.

## **SEK 125 million to gender equality initiatives at local and regional level**

In December 2007, the Government decided to grant the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions SEK 125, primarily for the purpose of

ensuring that activities and services to citizens are the same whether you are a man or a woman. The funds specifically target efforts to develop gender mainstreaming in the country's municipalities and county councils. This includes training key staff in organisations, building up a web-based knowledge bank for the ongoing dissemination of experience and instructive examples, and developing managerial systems.

## **Support for gender mainstreaming efforts of government agencies**

In July 2008, the Government assigned the University of Gothenburg (National Secretariat for Gender Research) to support the efforts of government agencies to promote gender mainstreaming.

The assignment includes:

- Further developing gender mainstreaming methods
- Creating a forum for exchanges of experience concerning gender mainstreaming
- Disseminating information about gender mainstreaming
- Paving the way for long-term support for gender mainstreaming

The total cost of the assignment is estimated at SEK 13 million.

## **Women's health**

The Swedish Government has tasked the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS) with initiating a research programme on women's health. SEK 30 million per year has been allocated for the purpose for the period 2008–2010. The research programme aims to enhance knowledge and to build up research environments able to continue developing once the project period ends.

## **Gender equality bonus**

On 1 July 2008, the Government introduced a gender equality bonus in the parental insurance system. The aim is to boost gender equality in terms both of parental leave and of participation in working life. The gender equality bonus is intended to encourage parents to share parental leave as evenly as possible. Under this reform, when the parent who has been home the longest works, that parent receives a tax credit while the other parent is claiming parental benefit.

## Deduction for household-related services

On 1 July 2007, household-related services became tax-deductible. The deduction effectively reduces the cost of buying such services by around 50 per cent. One of the aims of introducing tax relief in this area is to enable members of the household to increase their time in gainful employment and to make it easier for women and men to combine family life and working life on equal terms.

## Gender equality in the cultural sector

The Swedish Government has earmarked a total of SEK 6 million during the period 2007–2009 for efforts to promote gender equality in the performing arts and the cultural sector. The funds are intended primarily for initiatives and projects that encourage and support the development of greater equality in the performing arts.

## Government grants for women's organisations and gender equality projects

Each year, the National Board for Youth Affairs distributes SEK 28 million in grants to promote women's organisations. The aim is to promote women's participation in the democratic process and in public life by providing funds to women's organisations and to encourage their participation in the democratic process and public life, and by enabling them to look after their rights and interests and to push their demands.

The board also distributes SEK 6.9 million per year in grants to projects designed to promote gender equality. Grants are available for projects that reflect the Government's subgoals for gender equality policy.

## Government grants for gender equality among national minorities

The Swedish Government wants women from national minorities to gain a stronger position in society. In April 2008, it instructed the National Board for Youth Affairs to distribute grants to organisations to encourage their efforts to promote gender equality among national minorities. The assignment also includes developing forms for cooperation between the country's national minorities on gender equality-related matters. A total of SEK 6.5 million has been allocated for the purpose up to and including 2010.

## Grants to the parliamentary parties' women's organisations

As of 2008, a new grant of SEK 15 million is made available each year to support the parliamentary parties' women's organisations. The aim is to encourage women's organisations and strengthen their role in society.



REGERINGSKANSLIET

### Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality

SE-103 33 Stockholm, Sweden

Phone switchboard +46 8 405 10 00

All inquiries about content should be directed to the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, tel +46 8 405 10 00.

Additional copies of the fact sheet can be ordered from the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, tel +46 8 405 10 00. The Government's website: <http://www.sweden.gov.se>

Printed by Grafisk Service, Stockholm, Sweden, August 2009.

Fact sheet produced by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality.