



Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet
Jämställdhetsenheten

Ref: UNW/2022/003, Women in development – Sweden

Member States may wish to provide concrete examples of measures taken at the national level with regard to the issues outlined below, highlighting results achieved, lessons learned and opportunities for up-scaling and replication, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. Strengthening and implementing gender-responsive poverty eradication strategies, including social protection systems, to help ensure an adequate standard of living for women and girls, especially in response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (paragraph 10).

In light of the COVID-pandemic, the Swedish government has put forward large fiscal stimulus packages since the arrival of the pandemic and proposed a continuation of fiscal support throughout 2022. Since the start of the pandemic, the economic measures amount to almost USD 46 billion (SEK 400 billion) for 2020 and 2021. This corresponds to around USD 4 600 (SEK 40 000) per inhabitant. In addition, around USD 115 billion (SEK 1 000 billion) has been made available in various forms of loans and guarantees. Such large fiscal stimulus packages have served partly to off-set rising inequality, for example through Sweden's gender-sensitive budgeting process.

2. Increasing investments in and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programmes for full and productive employment and

decent work for all women, including their participation in and access to labour markets, and addressing women's disproportionate job losses during the COVID-19 crisis (paragraphs 31 and 32).

Sweden has long been characterized by a high proportion of women and men in the labour market, as well as by the fact that working life is segregated by gender. The Swedish model for wage formation means that the parties in the labour market set the framework for wage development in the entire labour market.

The Government assigned to the Gender Equality Authority to develop knowledge on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic gender equality in Sweden. The results of the study show, even though further studies need to be made, that the pandemic has had negative impact on economic equality between men and women. For example, more women than men have left the labour market and the women dominated health and care sector has been under severe stress.

3. Promoting the transition of women from informal employment to formal employment, including access to decent work, improved wages, social protection and quality childcare (paragraph 11).

Some of the most important reforms for promoting gender equality in Sweden were imposed in the 1970s, such as the **individual income taxation**, the **development and expansion of public childcare** and the **gender-neutral parental leave benefit**. These reforms promoted gender equality have had an important impact on women's labour market participation, earnings, well-being and bargaining power at home.

Parts of the unpaid household and care work, mostly performed by women, became the responsibility of the public welfare system. Consequently, women could gain access to employment and greater financial independence, which increased their well-being and bargaining power in the household. In addition, men were encouraged by law to take responsibility for their parental duties and household work to a greater extent. These different reforms also contributed to the development of a modern welfare state in Sweden which has proven to be essential for gender equality, as a well-functioning welfare sector enables both women and men to participate in the labour market on equal terms.

Individual taxation in combination with the expansion of childcare services as well as a steady increase of the reserved parental leave months for each parent had an important positive impact on women's employment rate.

In order to incentivise men to take more parental benefit days the Swedish Government subsequently increased the number of days reserved for each parent. In 1995, the first reserved month was introduced, and 2002 it was increased to two months. After these changes, fathers took out a higher proportion of the total parental allowance. In 2016 the Government added a third.

Furthermore, in 2020, the Government decided to appoint a commission for gender-equal lifetime earnings. The commission was instructed to present proposals that aim to increase economic equality between women and men in Sweden in the long term.

The Commission recently submitted the final report "Reducing the Gap - Measures on Lifetime Gender Equality". The Commission's proposals aim to increase economic equality in the long term and affects the work against inequality between women and men in working life and economic equality. This applies, for example, to suggested measures that should contribute to the promotion of equal pay, equal living income, an equal distribution of public support measures to women and men, and equal workplaces.

The Government has arranged a hearing regarding the report with the social partners and relevant authorities and currently the comments received from all involved parties are being compiled.

4. Prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women, including in the world of work, including against women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as migrant women and women with disabilities (paragraphs 16, 43, 44, 47)

The Instrument of Government stipulates that laws and regulations are not to disadvantage any person on the grounds of gender, with the exception when this is done to achieve gender equality and conscription or equivalent conscription.

In addition, the Swedish Discrimination Act aims at counteracting discrimination, as well as promoting equal rights based on gender and six other grounds of discrimination. The Swedish Discrimination Act stipulates that employers must work to prevent, promote and to counteract discrimination on the grounds of, among other things, gender. It includes that all employers must carry out annual wage surveys to detect unreasonable wage differences between women and men.

For the discrimination legislation to have an impact, it is required that those who are encompassed by the law are both aware of the legislation and have the will to comply with the provisions of the law. The Swedish Government has therefore instructed The Equality Ombudsman and the Swedish Work Environment Authority to inform and to increase knowledge on the regulations.

The Government has also appointed an inquiry to analyse whether the current supervision of the law is appropriate for effective compliance with the law.

Sweden has laws to protect women from discrimination, harassment, and online violence. The fact that violence against women has increased its presence online is also something that the Swedish government addresses within the framework of the national strategy (see question 8) to prevent and combat men's violence against women.

5. Promoting and protecting women's labour and human rights in the workplace through targeted measures, including universal minimum wage, social protection and equal pay for work of equal value, reducing occupational segregation and gender pay gaps and ensuring collective bargaining and recruitment, retention and promotion of women (paragraph 28)

Please see questions 2 and 3.

6. Recognizing, reducing and redistributing women's and girls' disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work and representing and rewarding women's paid care work, especially given

the increases in the unequal burden on women and girls during the COVID-19 period (paragraphs 29, 33 and 44).

The overall objective guiding the Swedish gender equality policy clarifies that women and men must have the same power to shape society and their own lives. With this as its starting point, the Government is working towards six sub-goals, of which one is an equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care work. This sub-goal states that women and men must have the same responsibility for unpaid housework and have the opportunity to give and receive care on equal terms.

A better balance between women's and men's unpaid home and care work is necessary for a gender-equal economy to be achieved. On average, women perform significantly more household work than men, which means less time for paid work in the labour market. According to a survey of the distribution of unpaid home and care work between women and men conducted in 2010, women spent an average of 45 minutes more of their time per day on this than men. In May 2022, Statistics Sweden reported a new survey of the distribution of unpaid home and care work which shows that the gender stereotypical distribution of unpaid work remains. For example, women spend more time cooking, washing and caring for children than men.

7. Supporting women's entrepreneurship, expanding existing women-owned and -led micro, small and medium enterprises and facilitating opportunities for new women entrepreneurs (paragraph 37).

Women's entrepreneurship is a strategically important growth issue for the Swedish government. New entrepreneurship and equal opportunities are important for Swedish business and for Swedish competitiveness. A diversity and variety of companies and entrepreneurs strengthens the Swedish economy's competitiveness, renewal, and sustainability.

At the same time, we also know that many women's skills and experiences are underused in business policy. In Sweden, almost 30 percent of companies are run by a woman, and we can see no other reason for this imbalance than that there is a history and tradition that disadvantages women's entrepreneurship.

Sweden, like many other countries, has worked to promote women's entrepreneurship over a long period of time. There have been both targeted initiatives to promote women's entrepreneurship and to promote a more positive image of the entrepreneur as a woman. Agencies, which work with promoting women's entrepreneurship, have instructions that ensure the distribution of funds between the sexes. Agencies and other contractors also report outcomes from investments and how well they have reached the goal of distribution. Efforts have also been made to produce research and analyses to better shape policy.

Women's entrepreneurship has increased over time. At the same time, this increase is very slow. A recently presented study shows that the proportion of companies run by a woman has increased from 25 percent in 1980 to 28 percent in 2020. This weak development is not unique to Sweden, similar developments are found in comparable countries. It is an international trend. There are therefore still obstacles to women's entrepreneurship that need to be dealt with politically in order to fully create equal and fair conditions for women to become entrepreneurs.

8. Preventing and eliminating all forms of violence, sexual harassment and discrimination against women and girls, including in the world of work, and addressing the increase in gender-based violence during the COVID-19 period (paragraphs 16 and 35)

The overall objective guiding the Swedish gender equality policy clarifies that women and men must have the same power to shape society and their own lives. With this as its starting point, the Government is working towards six sub-goals, of which one is Preventing and combating men's violence against women.

To prevent and combat men's violence against women is a priority for the Swedish Government since several years. Numerous inquiries have been proposed, many measures and resources has been allocated for the work which takes place on local, regional, and national level. For example,

In 2017 the Swedish Government adopted the current national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women. As a part of the

strategy's implementation, the Government has allocated SEK 600 million to an action plan, in addition to SEK 300 million to municipalities and county councils to develop their work.

The strategy has four objectives: 1. Increased and effective preventive work to combat violence. 2. Improved detection of violence and stronger protection for and support to women and children subjected to violence. 3. More effective crime-fighting. 4. Improved knowledge and methodological development.

The strategy emphasises two importance factors which are to work with violence prevention and men's participation and responsibility in stopping the violence.

The national strategy covers all forms of physical, psychological, and sexual violence and threats of violence against women and girls, including violence in close relationships, honour-related violence and oppression, and prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes.

To reach the objectives in the strategy, a well-functioning coordination between relevant actors at all levels is required. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency is commissioned to increase awareness of the strategy, improve coordination, contribute with knowledge, methods and support in the implementation.

On the first of July 2018 the new Sexual Crimes Act entered into force. This new legislation on sexual crime is based on the principle of consent. This change means that a perpetrator can be convicted without the use of violence, threats or exploiting another person's vulnerable situation.

Another important measure that the Swedish Government has implemented is to strengthen criminal law is the new legislation that protects children from witnessing violent- or sexual crimes in an intimate relationship by making it punishable to expose children to these actions.

The Government has also proposed that the minimum penalty for gross violation of a woman's integrity shall increase and the legislation on restraining orders shall be strengthen.

Furthermore, a special ground for aggravated punishment entered into force and crimes with honour-related motives are now being considered when deciding the penalty length.

The Swedish Government applies an intersectional perspective in the prevention and combatting of men's violence against women and acknowledge foreign-, asylum and disabled women.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the women's and girls' shelters were provided with extra government grants. The purpose of the grants was to give the shelters possibility to adjust their job to the extraordinary situation.

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency has also been assigned a task to identify and develop efficient working methods for how municipalities can disseminate information about domestic violence as well as honour related violence and oppression, and how contact can be established with victims of violence due to the COVID19 pandemic.

Furthermore, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government also set aside a total of SEK 230 million in 2020 and 2021 non-profit organizations' work with women that are subjected to abuse, children and LGBTQI as well as domestic violence and children in vulnerable situations. The support will help alleviate the increased vulnerability that may affect these groups due to the increased isolation that may lead to an increased incidence of violence, control, honour-related violence and oppression and domestic abuse.

9. Providing equitable and universal access to affordable and quality health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, for women and girls in order to achieve the realization of the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, particularly in contexts of HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 (paragraph 17-19)

The overall objective guiding the Swedish gender equality policy clarifies that women and men must have the same power to shape society and their own lives. With this as its starting point, the Government is working towards six

sub-goals, of which one is Gender equal health and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

A number of efforts to enhance women's health include e.g.:

- In 2015, the Swedish Government set aside on average SEK 1 billion a year in maternity care and women's health for the period 2019-2022. The funding set aside aims to improve skills supply, including staffing, in areas including maternity care and to improve neonatal care.
- From 2021, regions who are granted funds from the special effort must also ensure work is done in the region to improve care for those affected to sexual violence or female genital mutilation.
- To safeguard young women's right to reproductive and sexual health, the Government has made contraception free of charge to people under the age of 21.
- The Swedish Abortion Act: In Sweden, women have the legal right to have an abortion until eighteenth week of pregnancy, without specifying a reason for the decision. After the eighteenth week of pregnancy, an abortion may be performed only if it is approved by the National Board of Health and Welfare. Swedish legislation on abortion derives from the woman's right to decide on her own body and the right to choose whether or not to become parent. The legislation on abortion is also based on the ambition to minimise health risks for women who become pregnant involuntarily, and the balance between, on the one hand, women's right to abortion and, on the other hand, the fact that the foetus is gradually developing during the pregnancy.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, pregnant women in Sweden have been formally considered a risk group and have been compensated if unable to work, limiting the economic disadvantages in taking safety precautions during the pandemic. If needed, the pregnant woman's employer makes a risk assessment of the work environment. If the employer cannot relocate its employee or adapt the work tasks, for example to work from home, the employer can prohibit the employee from working. If the employer prohibits the employee from working, the pregnant woman is entitled to pregnancy benefit up to 100 percent of her salary by the state.

10. Promoting and protecting women's and girls' right to education and ensuring their safe and equal access to and participation in education throughout the life cycle and at all levels, given the prolonged suspension of educational activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and redressing the attrition of women and girl students (paragraph 24)

The overall objective guiding the Swedish gender equality policy clarifies that women and men must have the same power to shape society and their own lives. With this as its starting point, the Government is working towards six sub-goals, of which one is gender-equal education. The Government objective to ensure gender equal education aims at safeguarding that girls and boys, women and men have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to education.

The curriculum for compulsory school states that all schools should actively and consciously further equal rights and opportunities for women and men and counteract traditional gender norms. It also specifies that education and teaching should not split children and students based on gender. The Government is also taking steps to include the same requirements in the curricula for upper secondary school, upper secondary school for students with learning disabilities and adult education.

Under Swedish law, higher education institutions should always promote and take account of gender equality in their activities. In addition, the Swedish Government has assigned over 30 universities and university colleges to work with gender mainstreaming to contribute to achieving the national targets for gender equality. While more women than men attend and graduate from higher education in Sweden, only 29 per cent of professors are women. Therefore, the Government has set a goal of ensuring that half of all newly appointed professors shall be women by 2030.

To mitigate the effects of the pandemic, Sweden for example decided that schools should remain open to the extent possible. This has served both to protect children's right to education and to avoid an unfair additional care burden falling on women. Where schools nevertheless had to close, temporary parental benefits have limited the negative economic effects for

parents, which otherwise also often fall on women.

11. Integrating a gender perspective into climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes and providing adequate resources to ensure the full and equal participation of women in all levels of decision-making and implementation in these areas (paragraph 48)

Several governmental agencies with core activities relating to climate and the environment are engaged in the government's gender mainstreaming programme 2020-2025. These include: The Environment Protection Agency, the Swedish Energy Agency, the National Electrical Safety Board, the Swedish Transport Administration, Swedish Transport Agency, the Agency for Economic and Regional Growth and the Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis. These are all strategic actors with the ability to affect the climate and environment in substantial ways. The agencies have long term assignments to gender mainstream all their core operations in the areas of energy, transport, climate and the environment.

For example:

- The Swedish Transport Administration has made gender differences in road safety and the environment visible.
- The Swedish Energy Agency's work shows that a sustainable energy transition can only be achieved if men and women have the same rights, obligations and opportunities. Their work is based on the view that in creating an inclusive energy transition, the perspective of all relevant target groups must be taken into account.
- The Environmental Protection Agency plans to further develop sex/gender disaggregated statistics regarding climate and the environment.

The Swedish government has also assigned the Environment Protection Agency, in close collaboration with the Gender Equality Agency, to develop a proposal for a national strategy to integrate a gender perspective in the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The strategy is directed towards the

public sector, including academia. Civil society and the private sector are welcome to use it. The strategy follows the five focus areas of the Gender Action Plan of the United Nations Framework Convention (UNFCCC GAP).

12. Improving and systematizing the collection, analysis and dissemination of high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable disaggregated data, with a focus on women’s employment, informal employment, access to decent work and social protection, entrepreneurship, and unpaid care and domestic work through time-use surveys and satellite accounts to assess the contribution of such work to national income (paragraphs 49 and 50)

The Swedish Government strive to visualise gender in laws, ordinances, and other steering documents for governmental agencies. The Official Statistics Ordinance and the Ordinance on annual reports and budget documentation (2000:605) require statistics based on individuals to be disaggregated by sex.

Statistics Sweden was tasked with a mission to carry out a statistical survey regarding the division of unpaid housework and childcare between women and men. The aim of the study was to show how the unpaid workload has been divided during the COVID-19 period (please also see question 6).