



A Private Matter

Activity 3

Local and national policies supporting conciliation



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1. Global gender policy - CEDAW

Sweden is a party, since 1980, to the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). By accepting the Convention Sweden has undertaken a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms. The first is to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in the legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women. The second is to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination. The third is to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organisations or enterprises.¹

2. National gender policy - mainstreaming

In 1993 the Swedish government adopted gender mainstreaming as a strategy for integrating equal opportunities between gender concerns into all policies and areas of decision making and at all levels.²

Gender mainstreaming is not just a question of equal rights and opportunities for men and women. It is also a matter of making efficient use of all the potentials of society. In the governmental bill 2005/2006: 155 the Swedish government accounts for the updated overall goal of equal opportunities policy that is to ensure that women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities in all areas of life. An equal opportunities perspective must be present in all areas and at every level and stage of the decision making process. Priority is given to the following four areas:

- An equal distribution of power and influence between women and men. Women and men shall have the same rights and opportunities to be active citizens and to shape the conditions of decision-making.
- Economic equality between women and men. Women and men shall have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to education and paid work that provides lifelong economic independence.
- An 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 shall come to an end. Women and men, girls and boys, shall have equal rights and opportunities to physical integrity.³

In 2004 the Government adopted a special plan for gender mainstreaming at the Government Offices. Under this strategy each Minister is responsible for gender equality in his or her policy area and the Minister of Gender Equality is responsible for ensuring that progress is made and

¹ DAW

² Governmental bill 1993/94:137

³ Governmental bill 2005/2006:155



for following up measures at an overarching level. The work will be followed up annually using qualitative and quantitative indicators.⁴

As a first step in the work, about seventy analyses were carried out in 2004 and 2005 in the 47 policy areas. The main outcomes of these analyses were new objectives and indicators for the public agencies. In 2006 the work focused on the budget process, the directives that control Government commissions of inquiry and the governance of public agencies.⁵

Available governmental resources for equal opportunity measures in working life 2007 counts for SEK 409 millions.⁶

3. Gender in different policy areas concerning “A Private Matter”

Despite the fact that women during the 1990 have increased their level of education, strengthened their positions on the labour market, reduced their share of part time work, reduced their unpaid work and increased their share of paid work, we can see that differences between paid work and salary levels still are a fact between women and men, detrimental to women.

3.1. Employment

The Swedish Government and the Swedish Parliament have overarching responsibility for employment an overall labour market policy in Sweden. The National Labour Market Administration (AMS) translates these policies into practice in order to facilitate a well-functioning labour market. The Swedish Employment Services has the task to facilitate effective matches between jobseekers and job vacancies. They shall also counteract and prevent discrimination in working life so that all jobseekers have the same opportunities to obtain work.⁷ Special funds are allocated each year for this purpose (BRYT projects). The previous Government felt that more attention must be paid to how employers recruit and promote women and men. In line with this, the Government urged the AMS in its 2006 appropriation directions to work harder to influence employers' demands for non-traditional labour.⁸

Discrimination on grounds of gender in working life is dealt with in the Equal Opportunities Act (1991:433). The original version of the Equal Opportunities Act entered into force on July 1, 1980. The Act prohibits sex discrimination in the labor market and requires that all employers, whether in the public or private sector, shall actively promote equal opportunities for men and women in the working environment. Since 2001 all employers with a minimum of ten employees are required to prepare an annual equal opportunities plan as well as a plan of action for equal

⁴ Sixth And Seventh Periodic Report By The Government Of Sweden on the measures to give effect to the Convention On The Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Governmental Bill 2006/07:1

⁷ The National Labour Market Administration

⁸ Sixth And Seventh Periodic Report By The Government Of Sweden on the measures to give effect to the Convention On The Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women



pay.⁹ In 2004, a revised Equal Opportunities Act entered into force requiring that all companies with a minimum of 10 employees must report the gender distribution of their boards and management committees in their annual reports.¹⁰

In parallel with the Equal Opportunities Act a further act has been passed. It is known as the Prohibition against Discrimination Act (2003:307) and it entered into force 2005. Discrimination under this Act refers to direct and indirect discrimination, as well as harassment and instructions to discriminate. The following discrimination on grounds of gender is prohibited:

- in labour market policy activities, i.e. private and public job placement services
- during the start-up or running of a business
- in the exercise of a profession
- in membership and/or participation in an employees' organisation, employers' organisation or occupational organisation, or in benefit that such an organisation provides to its members
- in the professional provision of goods, services and housing.¹¹

Someone who discriminates or subjects another to reprisals is to pay damages for the violation that the discrimination involves. An employer is liable for damages for employee's actions towards third parties.¹²

The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, appointed by the Government, is head of a government body bearing the same name. The Ombudsman supervises above acts. The agency's tasks include seeking to develop methods and provide guidance and training to employers.¹³

3.1.1. Equal Pay

Women's salaries are on the average 92 percent of men's salaries. Women's lower labor supply and lower salary is to some extent compensated by redistribution of economical assets and lower taxes¹⁴.

Statistics Sweden (SCB) and the Mediation Institute (Medlingsinstitutet) annually report official wage statistics that cover the entire labour market. A method has been created to enable wage disparities between women and men to be monitored on an ongoing basis. The Mediation Institute publishes an annual report on wage trends with a chapter that analyses wage trends from a gender perspective.¹⁵

⁹ The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman

¹⁰ BudgetStatement. From the 2006 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill

¹¹ Sixth And Seventh Periodic Report By The Government Of Sweden on the measures to give effect to the Convention On The Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman

¹⁴ Governmental Bill 2005/2006:1 encl. 4

¹⁵ And Seventh Periodic Report By The Government Of Sweden on the measures to give effect to the Convention On The Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women



In Sweden wage formation is an issue for employers and trade unions. The Mediation Institute has pointed out the importance of constructing central agreements in such a way that they facilitate the work of local parties to achieve gender equal pay.¹⁶

Furthermore employers are prescribed in the Equal Opportunities Act to make a survey and analyse wage disparities between women and men.

3.1.2. Part time unemployment

33 percent of the women and 10 percent of the men worked part time 2004¹⁷. Those who involuntarily work part-time and want to work full-time are registered as part-time unemployed. Part-time unemployment is particularly prevalent in sectors dominated by women.

Part-time unemployment is a gender issue because it affects salary, development and career opportunities as well as levels of compensation in the social insurance system (sick pay and parental insurance, unemployment insurance and pensions).

Since 2002, a law (2002:293) has been in existence that prohibits the discrimination of part-time employees and employees whose employment is limited in duration. Indirect discrimination is also prohibited.¹⁸ The Ombudsman supervises the act.¹⁹

A legislation to strengthen the right to full-time work has been discussed.

3.1.3. Entrepreneurship

Of all entrepreneurs 25 percent is women and 75 percent is men. Like men, women run companies in all sectors and in all parts of the country. The most common sector is the service sector.²⁰

During 2002-2005 a total of SEK 37,3 million was allocated to particularly promote women's entrepreneurship.²¹

There are local and regional resource centers for women at about 130 places around Sweden. The focus of the work includes developing and raising knowledge of women's entrepreneurship and

¹⁶ And Seventh Periodic Report By The Government Of Sweden on the measures to give effect to the Convention On The Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women

¹⁷ Governmental Bill 2005/2006:1 enclosure 4

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ And Seventh Periodic Report By The Government Of Sweden on the measures to give effect to the Convention On The Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.



how to conduct development projects. The Government allocated SEK 51 million in 2005 to these centers.²²

3.2. Social issues/insurance

The main tasks of welfare policy are to lessen the gaps between different groups in society while at the same time providing people with security and an opportunity to develop.

3.2.1. Sick leave

Women take out 62 percent of sickness absence days, men 38 percent.²³

Swedish workforce is insured for employment-based benefits, which include sickness benefits and rehabilitation compensation. The laws and amendments decided by the Government and the Parliament are translated into practise by the National Social Insurance Board. The latter in turn informs the social insurance offices throughout Sweden who administers the grants and benefits to the insured.²⁴ Gender mainstreaming is a part of the practical application. The Office shall have methods and procedures for how officials should treat individuals, and process sickness insurance cases uniformly and in compliance with the law, regardless of the individual's gender.²⁵

An employee, who has worked for at least one month or has worked for fourteen days without a break, is entitled to sick pay from the employer for the first 14 days of illness. For the first day no payment is made. After 14 days the Insurance Office continues to pay sick pay. For longer periods than seven days, the employee must produce a sick note in order to continue receiving sickness benefits.²⁶

3.2.2. Parental leave

Parental rights in working life are regulated, inter alia, by the following: the Equal Opportunities Act (1991:433), the National Insurance Act (1962:381), the Social Insurance Act (1999:799) and the Parental Leave Act (1995:584). Under Section 5 of the Equal Opportunities Act, employers are required to facilitate the combination of employment and parenthood.²⁷

The parental leave insurance is equal for everyone in the Swedish labour market and the responsible authority is Swedish Social Insurance Agency. The Swedish welfare system redistributes economical assets from men to women. This is especially obvious regarding the parental leave. The total sum for parental leave (full and partial leave with parental benefit and leave with temporary parental benefit) 2003 was SEK 19, 5 billion distributed to 74 per cent

²² And Seventh Periodic Report By The Government Of Sweden on the measures to give effect to the Convention On The Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The Swedish Social Insurance Administration

²⁵ And Seventh Periodic Report By The Government Of Sweden on the measures to give effect to the Convention On The Elimination of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women

²⁶ The Swedish Social Insurance Administration

²⁷ Parenthood & Parental Insurance. The Current Situation in Sweden.



women and 26 per cent men. 2003 the insurance office paid parental leave to 57 per cent women and 43 per cent men.²⁸

60 days of the parental insurance benefit are reserved for each of the parents. The total of paid parental leave is 480 days. The days are always shared equally between both parents. One parent may give up the right to parental benefit to the other parent, except for the 60 days.²⁹ The government pays 80 percent of lost wages up to 652 SEK /day (69 Euro/day) for the first 390 days. A further 90 days can be taken for 60 SEK/day (6, 5 Euro/day). The leave can be used in a block, or be taken in batches before the child is eight. To be entitled to full paid parental leave (390 days) the parent must have worked at least six month before the child is born. Otherwise they only are entitled to the guarantee days which pay 180 SEK/day (19 Euro/day) for 390 days.³⁰

The Swedish parliament has adopted stronger legal protection for those on parental leave. Today employers may no longer refuse an applicant a job on the grounds that the person wishes to take parental leave in the near future. Stronger protection has also been incorporated into the Security of Employment Act. Under a new amendment, term of notice in the case of parents staying home with their children does not begin apply until the employee has returned to work. In 2002 an additional month of parental leave was introduced, reserved for the mother/father.³¹ On 1 July, 2006 the cap for parental benefit was raised. This may contribute to increased claims by men whose income at present is over the ceiling.³²

Additional to the parental insurance some parents also receive compensation according to different labor market insurance schemes. The insurance schemes for governmental employees are the most advantageous with a total compensation that gives 90 percent of the salary both under and above the public insurance cap during the entire parental leave. For municipal and county council employees the compensation is 90 percent the two first months of parental leave and thereafter 80 percent of the salary above the public insurance maximum for 7 months. In the private sector there are variations but often the labor market insurance schemes give 90 percent of the salary under and above the maximum for three months. The employees in the private sector have the least advantageous conditions.³³

3.2.3. Care of the elderly

A result of financial cuts in old-age care is that female relatives, primarily older wives and middle aged daughters, have increased the amount of unpaid work they do in the care of elderly women and men. Middle aged male relatives have not increased their amount of such work to the same extent.

²⁸ Governmental Bill 2005/2006:1 enclosure 4

²⁹ The insurance office

³⁰ The insurance office

³¹ Parenthood & Parental Insurance. The Current Situation in Sweden

³² Budget Statement. From the 2006 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill

³³ SNS



This is confirmed in a report dated February 2007 from the National Board of Health and Welfare where it is established that municipals rearrangements of the eldercare means that more and more elder live at home and that they move to elder care later on in their life's.³⁴

3.3. Education

The Swedish School system is a goal-based system with a high degree of local responsibility. The main responsibility lies with the municipals and authorities responsible for independent schools. Various steering documents are used to steer activities.³⁵ The national objectives of mainstreaming are included in these documents.

3.1.1. Child care

For almost three decades, child care has been an integral part of the Swedish welfare state and of most families' everyday lives. Swedish child care has dual aims. One is to make it possible for parents to combine parenthood with employment or studies (promoting equal opportunities) and the other is to support and encourage children's development and learning and help them grow up under conditions that are conducive to their well-being. Childcare has been a cornerstone of Swedish family welfare policy while at the same time having an explicitly educational orientation. In recent years, the educational policy aspects of child care have come increasingly to the fore, and in 1996 responsibility for public childcare were transferred to the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture.³⁶

The municipalities have an obligation to offer pre-school activities for at least 15 hours per week to children with unemployed parents and parents on parental leave. Pre-school free of charge for 4-5 years-olds was introduced 2003.³⁷

A maximum fee for pre-school activities and care of school-age children was introduced 2002. This means that there is a maximum on the fees payable by parents for their children. For the first child parents pay a maximum of 1260 SEK per month (137 Euro), for the second child the fee is a maximum of 840 SEK (91 Euro) and for the third the fee is a maximum of 420 SEK (46 Euro).³⁸

The proportion of children aged 1-6 in municipal child care was 12 percent in 1972 and 83 percent in 2003³⁹.

³⁴ National Board of Health and Welfare

³⁵ The Swedish National Agency for Education

³⁶ The Swedish National Agency for Education

³⁷ Budget Statement. From the 2006 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill

³⁸ The Swedish National Agency for Education

³⁹ Budget Statement. From the 2006 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill

4. The implementation of gender issues in Dalarna

The Dalarna County Administration translates the national gender policies to regional practice. They act as a coordinator for the gender issues between the state, county council and the municipals. The County Council also acts as a support function for the companies in the region in their gender work.⁴⁰ The region has three resource centers: Hedviq, the resource center for female forest owners and Minerva.⁴¹

The Hedviq resource centre in southern Dalarna is a meeting point for women networks, women entrepreneurs and for companies and organizations that wish to develop their equality work. Mentor programs, inspiration seminars and role models are corner stones in their activities. The objectives are to give women a common platform for development, to boost women entrepreneurship and to integrate gender equality in existing companies and organisations.⁴²

The resource centre for female forest owners in Dalarna aims to utilize experiences from earlier projects. Their objectives are to forward role models, create necessary conditions for women in management functions and to arrange activities for both men and women.⁴³

Minerva foundation is a Regional Resource Centre for the development of ideas and competence for women in Dalarna. One of the main activities is the Mentor Program which has been furthering women's careers since 1992. Minerva also pursues projects to develop leadership and diversity.⁴⁴ Minerva maintains contact with other Equal projects and coordinates the Swedish participation in the transnational partnership "A Private Matter" from where findings are canalized through Gender School to working life.⁴⁵ One project initiated by Minerva deals with the role of women's organizations and the gender-segregated labour market. Dissemination of knowledge is done via different channels, for example newsletters, homepages, seminars and work shops. The target groups are employers, employees, recruiters, union representatives, entrepreneurs etc. In the next section Gender School, its actors and objectives are described. The description is based on the Gender Schools internet page, see references.

4.1. Gender School

The objective is to achieve changes at a structural level with a method called Gender School. This is done by spreading knowledge of gender segregation, which in turn is intended to lead to gender-equality issues becoming everyone's concern at their workplace- and not just a question of women and the adaptation of women to male structures.

The Gender School project is based on cooperation among several influential actors in society. Besides Minerva these are Dalarna County Council, County Employment Board, National Road

⁴⁰ Dalarna County Administrative Board

⁴¹ Dalarna County Administrative Board

⁴² Hedemora Näringsliv

⁴³ The Federation of Swedish Farmers

⁴⁴ Minerva

⁴⁵ Gender School



Administration, Vh Assitans and Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees. These actors and their projects of interest are shortly described below.

4.1.1. Dalarna County Council

The County Council is the county's largest employer and they run their own subprojects and maintain an important position as an influencer of attitudes in the region.

Within the County Council there is being carried out an analysis and chartering of current management training programs to ensure that each training program contains a gender perspective as an integral part of each training session. The objective is that there be a gender perspective in each manager training course by the end of 2007 at the latest.

4.1.2. County Employment Board (Swedish Labour Market Administration)

The County Employment Board is a principal figure in the county's labour market with considerable dissemination power at various levels in society, and able to act as an influencing factor via the county's Employment Services.

The Swedish Employment Services has the task to facilitate effective matches between jobseekers and job vacancies. They shall also counteract and prevent discrimination in working life so that all jobseekers have the same opportunities to obtain work.⁴⁶ Government allocates special funds each year for this purpose called BRYT projects. Gender School will make a summary and analyse these projects because it is important to benefit from experiences already gained. Experiences from several hundred preventive projects are available, but they are currently spread over a considerable number of fragmented sources.

The previous Government felt that more attention must be paid to how employers recruit and promote women and men. In line with this, the Government urged the AMS in its 2006 appropriation directions to work harder to influence employers' demands for non-traditional labour.⁴⁷ The objective of the Gender School project "Recruitment – a conscious strategy to enhance gender equality" is to produce tools and methods which will be in place by the end of 2007 at the latest so that no discrimination arises prior to, during or after each recruitment process. The objective is also that the tools and methods be applied by at least one employer within the development partnership.

4.1.3. National Road Administration

The National Road Administration is a government authority that endeavours to provide citizens and industry with every opportunity to implement transportation in an efficient, secure and environmentally appropriate manner. One of the objectives of the Swedish Road Administration

⁴⁶ The National Labour Market Administration

⁴⁷ The Swedish Social Insurance Administration



is to endeavour to fulfil gender equality in the road transport system. An area of focus is career and leadership.

The National Road Administration will study professional conditions of women and men with the same education level. In the Gender School project “Career development – expanding opportunities” the objective is to generate tools within areas where incitement for career development with a gender perspective is required. Four perspectives with gender perspective are in focus: learning, effectiveness, utilisation of resources, and confirmation. Within the whole partnership career development should be a central part in both the employee’s and the managers’ development plans, and that the preconditions to transform these plans into reality really exist.

The National Road Administration will also assist with the development of new models for leadership training with a gender perspective. This is done in the subproject “Leadership from a gender perspective” of Gender School. The objective is that there will be a gender perspective in each manager training course by the end of 2007 at the latest, and that such be an integral part of each part of the training.

4.1.4. Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO)

The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees is a central organisation for professional employees. They provide the project with a trade union perspective which is needed in order to bring about change in the manner the labour market is apportioned according to gender. In the Gender School project “Gender from a trade-union perspective” the TCO’s role is to continuously analyse intermediate results with focus on trade-union aspects.

4.1.5. VH Assistans

VH Assistans is a private company working with personal assistance for children, young people and adults with disabilities. There is remarkably little assembled knowledge regarding gender perspectives of questions concerning disabled. VH assistans therefore wants increased knowledge about leadership by women with disabilities. The Gender School project “Women managers with disabilities” has the objective to place emphasis on women who, despite disabilities, hold managerial positions.



5. Innovations in the future

The Government intends to implement changes in family policy during this electoral period to promote more freedom of choice, greater gender equality, diversity in the pre-school and childcare system and more time with children. In order to achieve this the Government intends to present proposals on a childcare voucher system, to introduce a gender equality bonus and to enable municipalities to offer a child-raising allowance.

A childcare voucher can give increased opportunities to choose childcare. The voucher will cover most of the fee due to pre-school and childcare providers.

The gender equality bonus would give increased financial opportunities for families to share parental leave more equally as well as strengthening children's relations with both parents. A child-rearing allowance would provide a option for parents wishing to reduce their working hours while their children are small or to stay home longer than their parental insurance permits. The reforms will be implemented as the economy allows and funding can be secured.

The Government will also give proposals that will increase child care options and allow greater scope for buying services that make daily life easier.

The government proposes to close the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman and the three other offices of ombudsmen and replace them with a single ombudsman organization.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ BudgetStatement. Economic and budget policy guidelines

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