



Ministry of Employment

Sweden's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports to
the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

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Introduction

The goal of the child rights policy is that children and young people must be respected and given opportunities for development and security, and for participation and influence. This is based i.a. on Sweden's obligations due to its ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and aims to promote and protect children's rights and interests within society. The goal means that all children – regardless of factors such as age, gender, origin and disability – shall have their rights met.

Sweden takes its international obligations very seriously, and the Government welcomes the constructive dialogue with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) as part of the systematic and continuous monitoring of the work to strengthen the rights of the child. While drawing up this report, the Government has held thematic consultations with several civil society organisations. Ongoing dialogues are held with relevant agencies on the issues addressed in the report.

Due to the prescribed word limit, the questions submitted by the Committee in July 2020 have been answered very briefly. These responses constitute Sweden's combined sixth and seventh reports to the Committee. The appendix contains the requested statistics. The Government looks forward to developing the responses in the forthcoming dialogue with the Committee.

I. New developments

2.

(a) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Act

In 2018, the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) voted for the Government's proposal to enshrine the CRC into Swedish law. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Act (2018:1197) came into force on January 1, 2020. In its bill on incorporating the CRC, the Government presented a package consisting of an act regarding the CRC, a guidance document, a knowledge boost and continued systematic transformation work to ensure the CRC's impact in practical application.

The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden (BO), which is tasked with representing the rights and interests of children and young people based on the CRC, monitors compliance with the CRC within society and drives its

implementation in agencies, municipalities and regions. BO shall note shortcomings in the CRC's application and propose amendments to legislation and ordinances. BO also has specific remits within the field through i.a. its assignment within the Knowledge Boost and disseminating guidance. See also the response to questions 4 (b), 8 and 12 (a).

Institute for Human Rights

On June 9, 2021, the Riksdag adopted the Government's bill The Institute for Human Rights (IHR). IHR's mandate is established by the new Institute for Human Rights Act. IHR aims to promote the assurance of human rights based on i.a., international human rights conventions. It shall monitor, investigate and report on how human rights are respected and realised in Sweden. It shall also propose necessary actions to the Government. Its work can thereby contribute towards the Government's aim of ensuring full respect for Sweden's international obligations regarding human rights. IHR will be established on January 1, 2022.

(b) Supporting agencies and analysing consequences

During the year, BO has been tasked with supporting agencies in their work to disseminate information and knowledge related to COVID-19 to children, and to analyse the consequences of the pandemic for children and young people in Sweden. This has included surveying and reporting on children's and young people's experiences of the pandemic, focusing on children in vulnerable situations and with special needs. See also the response to question 2(c).

Support for non-profit organisations

In connection with the pandemic, the Government has earmarked SEK 330 million during 2020 and 2021 for non-profit organisations' work with children in vulnerable situations, and with women, children and lgbtiq-persons subjected to violence, and violence in close relationships. This shall help to alleviate the greater vulnerability that can affect these people due to increased isolation, leading to more incidences of violence, control, honour-based violence, oppression and abuse at home, and increased mental ill-health. Such initiatives may involve increasing support operations' online presence to reach vulnerable groups and support those who are subjected to violence.

The Government has also earmarked SEK 278 million during 2020 and 2021 to strengthen civil society's initiatives for those experiencing particular social vulnerability during the pandemic. In 2020, the Government reinforced civil society's general conditions during and after the pandemic with a total of SEK 175 million in 2020 and SEK 150 million in 2021. This includes SEK 100 million for children's and young people's organisations.

The Government has provided support for sport, specifically children's and young people's sport, to alleviate the economic effects of COVID-19 on sport nationwide. SEK 1 500 million was paid out for this purpose in 2020. The Government has allocated a further SEK 1 955 million in support for sport in 2021. This grant has been allocated by the Swedish Sports Confederation.

During 2021, the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW) has been tasked with allocating SEK 200 million to municipalities for free, COVID-safe school holiday activities in 2021. These activities can be arranged within leisure time centres or open leisure activities, or by civil society organisations, with a focus on children and young people aged 6–15.

Initiatives linked to schools

The Public Health Agency of Sweden (PHAS) has produced information for preschools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools about COVID-19. To support the implementation of the national general advice to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the agency has also produced a national information initiative aimed at young people and adults, starting with year 7, in all forms of education.

The Government has decided on temporary regulations to ensure the education children and students are entitled to despite the pandemic. These regulations allow schools to use remote or distance teaching in certain situations.

The Government has also decided on temporary regulations to give parents temporary parental benefit if they have to stay at home with their children because of school closures due to COVID-19. In addition, the Government has taken the initiative for preventive temporary parental benefit for those children who have previously been seriously ill and risk being seriously

affected by COVID-19 infection. This allows the parent to stay at home with the child to protect them against infection.

Increasing housing benefit

In connection with the economic crisis following COVID-19, the Government has decided to increase the child-related element of housing benefit.

Analysis of social services operations

The Government has tasked the Swedish Agency for Health and Care Services Analysis with analysing the consequences of the pandemic for social services operations within individual and family care, in the short term and a year ahead.

(c)

Children's participation and opportunities to demand their rights

Most municipalities work to give young people local influence. However, there are major differences between municipalities regarding level of ambition and how many young people are reached by existing initiatives. There is a need for government initiatives to strengthen young people's possibilities for active participation, and to strengthen the work to promote their involvement and participation. Against this background, a number of agencies have been tasked with promoting young people's involvement and participation in democracy, including BO, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), the National Board of Institutional Care (SiS) and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR).

BO is tasked with representing children and young people regarding their rights based on the CRC, and holds regular dialogues with children and young people to obtain knowledge of their conditions and opinions on relevant issues. Through reports from BO and other actors, the Committee's reviews and the dialogue with the Children's Rights Delegation, a forum for dialogue between the Government and civil society organisations in Sweden, the Government can identify which groups of children are particularly vulnerable to rights infringements.

Civil society organisations are central to ensuring the impact of children's rights. Within this review process, the Government has held thematic

consultations with several organisations, including youth organisations. These have contributed towards deeper and broader knowledge about children's living conditions with a particular focus on children who have been exposed to violence or are in social care, or whose living conditions have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government has also published information regarding this review process on [regeringen.se](https://www.regeringen.se) including information about the report aimed at children.

Studies in which children have participated also represent important data, such as BO's annual report on the CRC during a societal crisis. The report is based on interviews with over a hundred children who talk about their rights and how the pandemic has affected them. The ombudsman's annual report, 2019– based on interviews with 35 children in social care and a quantitative investigation using a survey with 260 responding children at youth detention centres – also provides important data. It emphasises that children and young people want to be treated with respect, consideration, commitment and kindness. They want adults to listen to them and take them seriously. The report also shows that there are sometimes shortcomings in the contact between social workers/staff and children.

In order to have opportunities for participation and influence, children must also know about their rights. BO continues to develop and publicise the [minarattigheter.se](https://www.minarattigheter.se) portal. In order for children to have their rights met, they must also be able to demand them. Such demands can take place in different ways. Ratification of the third Optional Protocol on an individual complaints procedure should be considered, and the Government will review the issue.

See also the responses to questions 3 and 23(a).

Violence against children

According to a 2021 study by the Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden (CWFS), *Young people, sex and the internet since #MeToo (2021)*, an increased number of young people compared to the 2014 study stated that they had suffered sexual abuse during their childhood. In the 2021 study the proportion who had been abused rose from one in five to one in four, and girls had been abused to a higher extent. Almost one in three girls said they had experienced sexual abuse during their childhood. At the same time, the mapping of violence against children carried out in Sweden since 1980 – in which children, as in the study above, were asked questions about exposure

to violence (see also the response to question 7(a)) – indicates a significant drop in corporal punishment methods between 1980 and 2000. Since then, violence against children within the family has stabilised at a very low level by international standards. NBHW's patient register (ICD –Abuse by another person) suggests reductions in several forms of violence against children in Sweden, particularly in a long-term perspective.

It is unacceptable for children to grow up with violence and abuse. Despite a clear objective that no child should be exposed to violence, many children and young people in Sweden are affected by violence during their childhood, and from the Government's perspective the right to be protected from violence is still not fully met despite efforts having been carried out. For example, there are shortcomings in terms of preventive work, cooperation between relevant actors and support, protection and treatment for children who have experienced violence. The Government has therefore appointed an inquiry to submit a proposal for a national strategy to prevent and combat violence against children, including honour-based violence and oppression. This strategy shall establish an overall perspective and facilitate a cohesive focus for the work over the next ten years. The strategy shall also address the many different forms of violence that children and young people of various ages may be exposed to today, e.g. violence in close relationships, sexual violence, violence between children and honour-based violence and oppression. This assignment shall be reported on by May 31, 2022. See also the response to question 18(b).

Sexual exploitation and online abuse

Online sexual abuse against children has increased. According to the European Commission's 2020 strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse, the number of reported instances of online sexual abuse of children has risen dramatically in the EU. There has been a similar increase worldwide. The study *Young people, sex and the internet since #MeToo* (see above) also suggests that a greater proportion of young people who have had sex online felt pressured or forced. The Government takes sexual crimes – particularly against children – very seriously. Many measures have therefore been taken to improve the opportunities to fight such crimes, and new initiatives are taken continuously.

In January 2020, the Government appointed an inquiry on sexual crimes tasked with analysing and reviewing principles and provisions relating to

criminal liability for sexual crimes committed remotely, i.e. without any physical contact between the perpetrator and the victim. The inquiry submitted its report in June 2021, proposing that the provisions on rape, sexual assault and corresponding crimes against children should be expanded to include offences committed remotely where the perpetrator has not taken part in the act in real time.

The Government presented a package of measures in June 2021 to intensify the work to combat men's violence against women. In accordance with this package, an inquiry will review the protection under criminal law for children aged 15–17 against sexual violations, especially in relation to purchases of sexual acts and i.a. evaluate the application of the requirement of negligence for perpetrators regarding the victim's age in sexual crimes against children. The inquiry will also review the regulations on purchase of sexual services, exploitation of children through purchase of sexual acts and procuring in relation to online prostitution, especially regarding minors and so-called sugar dating.

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency has been tasked with strengthening the work to prevent and combat children and young people being used in prostitution and trafficking in human beings (thb). The Agency shall map occurrences of – and disseminate knowledge about the need for specific efforts to counter children being used in prostitution or exposed to thb.

Safety and security for children in alternative care

The safety and security for children in alternative care needs to be strengthened. The child's rights must be of primary consideration. Conditions shall always be better, not worse, for children placed in alternative care. Several measures were taken regarding this during 2021. On March 10th, a ministry memorandum was presented on the child's best interests when care under the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act (1990:52) ends. This presented new legislative proposals for the Social Services Act (2001:453) and the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act, aiming to strengthen the principle of the child's best interests when such care ends. Consultation comments are currently being analysed by the Government Offices.

The Government has appointed an inquiry tasked with reviewing and proposing measures to improve the quality of care for children and young people cared for in foster homes, supported housing, residential care home

and special youth detention centres. The best interests of the child should be the starting point for assessing how quality can be ensured and which measures are proposed. Yet another inquiry shall review the rules on custody transfer and adoption in the Parental Code. This inquiry aims to create better conditions for continuity, stability and security for children placed in alternative homes. The Riksdag's Committee on Health and Welfare has decided to appoint an inquiry to review how the principle of the best interests of the child can be strengthened in connection with assessments on ending compulsory care. The proposal shall be submitted by March 1, 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on children

The COVID-19 pandemic has involved major societal challenges with serious consequences for children's opportunities to exercise their rights, particularly those in vulnerable situations. The pandemic highlights the need for continued strategic, systematic work to apply the CRC in practice. Several reports show that even though children and young people are generally not thought to be affected as badly by the actual virus, the consequences of the pandemic for children are serious – particularly for children in vulnerable situations. Children's right to health and development can be affected by the virus itself, by how parents are affected, by distance teaching and by cancelled leisure activities and opportunities to enjoy culture, and there is a risk that conflicts in the home have escalated or have had even more serious consequences.

Several reports show a greater need for support (BO's 2021 annual report, BRIS's 2020 annual report, Save the Children Sweden's report on lives being put on hold, and the Swedish Agency for Participation's 2021 report on children and young people in the pandemic, focusing on the pandemic's affect on children and youth with disabilities). The Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (IFAU Report 2021:2) suggests that the consequences of the pandemic for children's and young people's schooling and entry to the labour market will probably be extensive, at both individual and societal levels.

The Government has therefore decided to task BO with supporting agencies, etc., and to analyse the consequences. See the response to question 2(b). BO's reports of the assignment show, for instance, that many children have been negatively affected by COVID-19 and the resulting shut-down of

society, regional differences and shortcomings in the application of the CRC, and a need for ongoing monitoring and analysis of how children have been affected by the pandemic. As well as the contributions mentioned in the response to question 2(b), the Government also intends to earmark SEK 20 million per year for a long-term grant focusing on children's rights organisations and supporting vulnerable children.

3. Agenda 2030

National coordinator

In 2020, the Government appointed a national coordinator for Agenda 2030. The coordinator's work involves a specific focus on children's and young people's perspectives and participation, and on those in particularly vulnerable situations.

Bill

On June 17, 2020 the Government presented a bill for Sweden's implementation of Agenda 2030 and the global Sustainable Development Goals. The bill includes a section dedicated to children's rights. The agenda highlights the long-term perspective and features the perspectives of children and young people, to give the next generation influence over today's decisions. One starting point for sustainable development is the generation perspective, meaning that developments satisfying today's needs must not jeopardise future generations' opportunities to satisfy their needs and enjoy their rights.

Monitoring

In 2018, the Government tasked Statistics Sweden (SCB) with coordinating the development, production and accessibility of statistics for monitoring Sweden's implementation of Agenda 2030. The 17 global goals have 169 sub-goals and 230 global indicators. 35 of these indicators relate directly to children. Statistical monitoring of Sweden's challenges and successes also provides a basis for further discussion on Sweden's implementation of the agenda.

Youth representation

Sweden is working to strengthen the role and influence of young people in processes relating to Agenda 2030, both nationally and internationally, e.g. by financing youth representation. Sweden currently has youth

representatives for the Nordic Committee for Children and Young People the European Economic and Social Committee the European Commission's structured dialogue, Sweden's UNESCO Council, and the UN's Conference of the Parties, High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and General Assembly. Within the Nordic region, Sweden works at various levels to support children's and young people's inclusion as actors for change, both now and in the future. One example is ReGeneration 2030, an Agenda 2030 youth movement run by young people from countries in the Baltic region.

Review

Sweden presented a voluntary national review at the HLPF in July 2021. A child and youth perspective when drawing up the report was particularly important, including children's and young people's voices and actors within civil society who work with thematic issues that affect them. The national review is another example of how a child rights perspective is integrated into Sweden's work. The review clarified how Sweden can accelerate its work to integrate a child rights perspective. For example, the Government and NOD will hold more in-depth dialogue with civil society on young people's inclusion in Agenda 2030 work during autumn 2021. In connection with last year's HLPF, Sweden also presented a report on no one being left behind. The report focuses on future generations and highlights areas where children are particularly vulnerable, emphasising why children's and young people's empowerment, participation and wellbeing are important for achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals.

BO's work

In its work during 2020 to systematically monitor and evaluate the CRC's application, BO has developed its contributions towards implementing Agenda 2030 and the global Sustainable Development Goals. BO has been involved in SCB's Agenda 2030 reference group work, with the aim of contributing knowledge about children's and young people's living conditions, and has worked with Goal 16.2 to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. Here, BO has submitted data, information and participated in discussions on Sweden's work as a pathfinding country in the Global Partnership and working with the Government's forthcoming strategy to prevent and combat all forms of violence against children.

II. Rights under the Convention and the Optional Protocols

A. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44 (6))

Legislation

4.(a) In connection with the Government's bill on incorporating the CRC, an inquiry was tasked with mapping how Swedish legislation and practice correspond with the CRC, to provide support in the ongoing work to transform the CRC's provisions within various legal areas. The inquiry was not tasked with submitting draft proposals. In November 2020 the inquiry submitted its report to the Government. According to the inquiry's assessment, Swedish legislation and practice largely correspond with the CRC. The inquiry ascertained that Swedish legislation and practice comply with the content of articles 1–42, except for around 30 incompatibilities. The inquiry also made certain observations on provisions in Swedish legislation that could comply more clearly with the CRC, and on shortcomings in practical application that could involve children's rights not being met. The inquiry notes that the provisions on the best interests of the child and the child's right to express an opinion and have it taken into account do not have their full impact within certain legal fields.

(b) The CRC has partly been incorporated into Swedish law through transformation. Regarding other aspects, it has been assessed that there is no need for transformation since norm harmonisation is deemed to exist. The two ratified optional protocols are already incorporated into Swedish law, including through various provisions in the Criminal Code. Through incorporation, the CRC's provisions are law and, with the reservation that not all provisions are directly applicable in every case, can form the basis for agencies' decisions even when the CRC's provisions are not explicitly detailed in other legislation. Incorporating the CRC does not give it priority over other legislation. Any contradiction between the incorporated CRC and other legislation must be resolved using general legal interpretation principles.

When the CRC was incorporated into Swedish law, additional knowledge was needed to ensure that children's rights are safeguarded in legal application. Guidance has thus been produced at the Government's initiative

as method support when interpreting and applying the CRC. BO has been tasked with disseminating this guidance and providing relevant training. The aim is that those applying the law within the public sector should gain deeper knowledge about methodically interpreting and applying international conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

(c) The Swedish legislator has an obligation to ensure that internal law corresponds with the CRC. The CRC also has significance for interpreting Swedish law, and thus for legal application, since courts and other agencies are obliged to interpret internal rules of law in accordance with international obligations where possible, i.e. interpretation in conformity with the spirit of the treaty. If such an interpretation of the internal rules is impossible, the content of the provision shall follow an application of other applicable principles of legal interpretation. Incorporating the CRC into Swedish law involves clarifying that courts and legal practitioners at all levels shall consider the rights that follow from the CRC in deliberations and assessments in decision-making processes in cases concerning children. See the response to question 2 (b)

For several years there has been a specific policy area for implementing the CRC. BO plays a central role in implementing the CRC in Sweden.

(d) In March 2016, the Child Rights Inquiry submitted its report to the Government. The inquiry proposed incorporating the CRC into Swedish law. The inquiry also noted that children's rights do not have sufficient impact in practical application within agencies, municipalities and regions. The inquiry therefore proposed a knowledge boost on the CRC's practical application in relation to various public sector operations. The Government has initiated a knowledge boost and given BO and other agencies assignments to raise knowledge and strengthen competence regarding children's rights/the CRC within agencies, municipalities and regions. See also the responses to questions 4(a) and 8.

Comprehensive policy, strategy and coordination

5.(a) The national strategy to strengthen children's rights in Sweden was adopted in 2009. In 2012, the Government decided to task BO with communicating and disseminating the strategy to agencies, municipalities, regions and other relevant actors. The aim was to clarify the responsibility for meeting children's rights and to motivate decision-makers to act and

carry out initiatives to integrate the strategy. BO carried out a measurement before initiating the project in 2012 and a follow-up measurement after its conclusion in 2014, to evaluate whether the work had contributed towards change and the implementation of the strategy. Overall, the results showed that BO's work had produced results in all areas and the assignment had contributed towards change in the included municipalities and regions.

(b) The Social Services Act (2001:453) applies to all municipalities' operations involving children and young people who need protection or support in accordance with this legislation. The provisions on the best interests of the child constitute one of the Act's opening paragraphs. When actions involve children, particular attention should be paid to the best interests of the child. The provision shall be applied in relation to other provisions in the legislation. The CRC and the best interests of the child and right to participation are starting points for the regulations, general advice and support materials being produced by NBHW, and are aimed at social services for supporting and protecting children and young people. The Health and Social Care Inspectorate (IVO) supervises the Act, and thus also operations relating to children and young people covered by the Act.

Allocation of resources

6.(a) The child rights policy is intersectoral. This means that children's rights and interests shall characterise all policies and operations affecting children. The results of implemented initiatives linked to the child rights policy's objectives are reported within each policy area of the Budget Bill. To ensure that the work to promote and protect the rights of the child has an impact, the Government Offices has a unit with the responsibility of coordinating and developing issues relating to the rights of the child. The work aims i.a. to initiate, support and coordinate processes so that the child rights perspective is reflected in all aspects of societal operations regarding children. The Government also has specific funding for implementing the CRC in Sweden. Between 2012 and 2021, this funding totalled SEK 436 million.

(b) When submitting the 2020 budget, the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Gender Equality with responsibility for child rights issues for example held a special press conference on the budget, in order to inform children directly how the budget policy affects them. Only children can ask questions at children's press conferences.

(c) See the response to question 2(b).

7. Data collection

BO shall compile statistics on children's and young people's living conditions, including an annual follow-up consisting of monitoring and analysing the development of indicators and other statistics within one or more focus areas. This work will continue in dialogue with SCB.

Since 2001, SCB has investigated the living conditions of children 12–18. This is a central, unique source for monitoring economic family policy and child rights policy, and for research into children's living conditions. The study asks questions about issues such as children's physical and mental health, economic circumstances, housing, social relationships and leisure activities. A review of the study is currently being carried out to improve surveys for children and to find out more about children in particularly vulnerable situations, such as children with single parents, children from foreign backgrounds and children with disabilities.

(a) National knowledge centre on violence and other forms of abuse

Barnafrid is a national knowledge centre placed at Linköping University. Its role is to gather and disseminate knowledge about violence and other forms of abuse in relation to children. Barnafrid is aimed at professionals who, in their work, meet children and young people who are subjected to violence and other forms of abuse, as well as those working for bodies such as government agencies. Its objective is to contribute towards improved preventive work and to develop effective initiatives for protecting and supporting children who are exposed to violence and other forms of abuse.

Official crime statistics and other statistics about violence and other forms of abuse

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) is responsible for official crime statistics, which include data of the number of reported offences of assault against children. In 2018, two new crimes were introduced: negligent rape and negligent sexual assault. From 2019 onwards, crime statistics for these crimes are divided up by gender and age (15–17).

Since 2006, Brå has conducted The Swedish Crime Survey (SCS) annually. The survey measures reported exposure to crime, experiences of anxiety and insecurity concerning crime as well as trust in the justice system and crime

victims' experiences of contact with the justice system. Brå also carries out the School Survey on Crime (SSC), which measures reported exposure to and involvement in crime among year 9 students. NBHW's statistics database includes information about the number of minors admitted to hospital due to violence and abuse.

Mapping incidences of violence

Corporal punishment and other forms of harassment against children have been studied continuously in Sweden at national level since corporal punishment was banned in the Parental Code in 1979. The most recent mapping was carried out in 2016 by the CWFS in cooperation with Karlstad University and funded by the Government. The Government has granted the Foundation funding to produce a new mapping of violence against children in Sweden. This investigation will be carried out during 2020–2023. The Government has also granted the Foundation funding to carry out a national, repeated study in 2019 and 2021 on young people's sexuality, exposure to sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and sexual exposure via digital media.

Statistics on exposed and potentially exposed victims of trafficking in human beings

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency operates a national support line for professionals as part of its national coordinating assignment to combat trafficking in human beings (thb). Through data from the support line and the regional coordinators against prostitution and thb within the social services, the Agency issues statistics regarding victims and presumed victims of thb. These statistics include children who are victims or presumed victims of thb and children accompanying adults who are exposed or potentially exposed to thb.

(b) Knowledge summary and methods for child inclusion

In 2016 the Government awarded the CWFS funding to carry out a systematic knowledge summary of the overall vulnerability to violence and harassment of girls and boys with disabilities. The knowledge summary was carried out in partnership with Barnafriid, and includes the scope of different forms of violence against children with disabilities in different environments and how this violence is captured/detected by others in the child's surroundings. It emphasised how research shows that children with disabilities are more exposed to violence than other children, and that there is little research showing the difference between different disabilities,

between children with mild and serious or multiple disabilities, and between girls' and boys' vulnerability.

Barnafrid is drawing up a method for child inclusion in research and development activities. The aim is to produce an adapted version of the method to include children with disabilities and younger children in research.

Social services' statistics

Data on children in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations is also gathered regularly as part of the social services' work with children in alternative care. These statistics are quality assured and developed continuously. In terms of children and adults with different disabilities, SCB was tasked by the Government in 2011–2016 with reporting and proposing the development of data on living conditions for persons with disabilities. SCB was also tasked in 2019 with producing and reporting statistics on living conditions for persons with disabilities, and will review the definition of disability and produce a definition to use as a basis for national statistics and surveys.

Summarising children's and young people's exposure to racism

See above regarding the review of SCB's study of children's living conditions regarding children from foreign backgrounds. The Government has also tasked BO with compiling knowledge about children's and young people's exposure to racism, based on the CRC. This includes mapping their exposure to racism based on their own perspectives. The aim is to produce an overall picture of how racism against children and young people is expressed and in which contexts, how children's and young people's living conditions are affected by racism and how their exposure to racism can be counteracted and prevented. This assignment shall be reported on by December 1, 2021. See also above.

Dissemination and awareness-raising

8.

Website on rights

During 2015–2018, BO was tasked by the Government with carrying out initiatives to raise awareness among children and young people of their rights under the CRC. The aim was to increase knowledge about what these rights mean in practice. As part of this assignment, BO created a website for children and young people – My rights – about the CRC and the rights of

the child, as well as information for teachers. The Government also tasked BO in March 2020 with strengthening and developing the democracy perspective on the website.

The knowledge boost for the rights of the child

The Government's knowledge boost for children's rights began on January 1, 2017, aiming to raise awareness and strengthen competence regarding children's rights/the CRC within agencies, municipalities and regions. The aim was to enhance the practical application of children's rights/the CRC among the public sector.

As part of this initiative, BO was tasked during 2017–2021 with supporting municipalities and regions to ensure the CRC's application within central operational areas. Since 2017, BO has also been tasked with offering support to a number of agencies in their work to develop the practical application of the CRC in their operations. 25 agencies have been involved to date, including the Swedish Migration Agency, the Swedish Police Authority, the Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE) and NBHW. The agencies have been tasked with analysing and identifying development needs and taking appropriate actions based on their analyses and conclusions. Certain agencies have also been given continuation assignments focusing on particularly urgent children's rights issues. With the framework of the support offered by BO to the public sector, BO has developed digital process support which includes various tools for implementing the CRC, e.g. online training on the CRC and methods for assessing the best interests of the child and right to be heard. This digital support can now be used by all public sector actors.

BO has had an evaluation carried out of its work with the first ten agencies included in the knowledge boost. Overall, the evaluation shows that several of the agencies have mapped their starting position regarding children's rights. Most agencies have produced action plans or strategies for work relating to children's rights. A few agencies have decided on objectives or indicators for this work. All agencies have carried out skills development initiatives for both managers and employees linked to children's rights.

Since June 2019, the county administrative boards have been tasked by the Government with working with BO to coordinate and develop their application of children's rights, and to support the work to ensure the

application of children's rights in municipalities and regions. The aim is to contribute to ensure the application of the rights of the child in practice to a greater extent at municipal and regional levels.

Independent monitoring

9. BO has presented a proposal for how individual complaints from children and young people can be received and investigated. The proposal is being processed by the Government Offices.

Children's rights and the business sector

10.

(a) In 2018, the Swedish Agency for Public Management was tasked by the Government with evaluating compliance with the action plan for businesses and human rights. This showed that support for businesses regarding human rights in connection with overseas promotion has increased.

(b) In 2019, a platform for internationally sustainable business was launched. This was developed from the action plan, and summarises what the Government is doing within the field and its ambitions.

B. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12)

Non-discrimination

11.(a) According to the Instrument of Government, Sweden's constitution, society shall work to ensure that all people can achieve participation and equality in society, and that children's rights are protected. Society shall counter discrimination on the grounds of skin colour, national or ethnic origin, and linguistic or religious affiliation. Discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin is also forbidden by the Discrimination Act (2008:567).

Sweden has extensive criminal law legislation forbidding various expression of racism. A parliamentary committee has proposed that a ban on racist organisations should also be introduced through new criminal law legislation establishing two new crimes: organised racism and support for organised racism. It is proposed that the legislation enters into force on July 1, 2022.

(b)

Children living in socioeconomic vulnerability and children in care

The Social Services Act states that social services shall be based on democracy and solidarity to promote people's economic and social security, equal living conditions and active participation in society. This is national legislation which covers all children. The municipalities and SiS shall apply it in their municipal activities and compulsory care.

Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children

The municipality is responsible for the practical reception of unaccompanied migrant children, i.e. accommodation, daily care, any special support, conservators and schooling. Municipal reception is based on the principle of normalisation. This means that, as far as possible, all children staying in Sweden should experience the same care system.

Asylum-seeking children also have certain rights according to the Aliens Act (2005:716). Asylum-seeking children have the same right to education as other children according to the Education Act (2010:800), but are not subject to compulsory school attendance. Asylum-seeking children have the right to preschool on the same terms as all other children in Sweden. Children staying in Sweden without permits also have the right to education on the same terms as other children, according to the Education Act.

The regions shall offer asylum-seeking children and children staying in Sweden without a residence permit or legal support healthcare and dental care to the same extent and on the same terms as all children living in the region.

The Swedish Migration Agency has information materials aimed at asylum-seeking children. This includes the CRC's articles, and explains that asylum-seeking children have the same rights as other children in Swedish society. The Agency also provides information aimed at adults about children in the asylum process.

See also the response to question 29(e).

Roma and Sami children

On January 1, 2019, amendments to the National Minorities and Minority Languages Act (2009:724) (the Minorities Act), the Education Act

(2010:800) and the Social Services Act (2001:453) entered into force. These amendments reinforce the national minorities' rights and strengthen requirements to include children and young people in the minority policy's implementation. According to the Minorities Act, society shall specifically promote children's development of a cultural identity and use of their own minority language. This provision is based on Sweden's obligations in the CRC. National minorities shall be given the opportunity for influence in issues affecting them, and this influence shall be adapted to children and young people.

Since 2012, Sweden has had a strategy for Roma inclusion with the aim that Roma turning 20 in 2032 shall have equal opportunities in life to non-Roma. The strategy is based on the principle of non-discrimination, and includes initiatives for children within education, employment, housing, health, social care and security, culture and language, and civil society organisation.

The first eight years have involved bridge-building initiatives in schools, with people with Roma linguistic and cultural expertise supporting Roma pupils. There have also been youth organisation initiatives.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children

Since 2014, the Government's work has been based on the strategy for equal rights and opportunities, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. In January 2021, the Government decided on an action plan to complement the existing strategy and strengthen the work with concrete actions for 2020–2023. The action plan includes actions within several focus areas.

Within the focus area for young lgbtiq-persons, SNAE and MUCF will continue working for equal rights and a more inclusive school environment for young lgbtiq-persons. MUCF has been tasked with working for a more inclusive school environment and meeting places for young lgbtiq-persons outside school, as well as a wider overall work to monitor developments and the situation for young lgbtiq-persons in Sweden today. As part of the strengthened work, BO has also been tasked with investigating the development needs and initiatives required to make school a safer, more inclusive place for young transpersons and non-binary persons.

(c) The Discrimination Act (2008:567) prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or other declaration of faith, disability, sexual orientation or age. This protection largely covers all sectors of society. The Equality Ombudsman (DO) monitors compliance with the Act. DO shall contribute, by providing advice and via other means, towards those who encounter discrimination being able to exercise their rights. DO can investigate reports of discrimination and direct individuals' discrimination cases to the courts.

The Government has appointed an inquiry to conduct an effective and appropriate review of the Swedish Discrimination Act, which has been tasked with reviewing how monitoring discrimination in areas governed by the Education Act can be transferred from DO to the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (SSI). The inquiry submitted its interim report on December 15, 2020 and it is being processed by the Government Offices.

Best interests of the child

12.(a) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Act (2018:1197) came into force on January 1, 2020. The bill states that in order for the CRC to have an impact, ongoing transformation of the CRC is required in addition to incorporation. The CRC should continue to be highlighted in preparatory work for legislation where children's rights may be relevant. This transformation needs to continue and become more systematic in order to ensure a clearer link to the rights in the CRC. The ongoing transformation work should include a particular focus on the principle of the best interests of the child as an approach in decision-making processes, and the rights of the child to express their views and have them given due weight. Government agencies at different levels that make decisions affecting children must assess and establish the best interests of the child through child-friendly processes. This involves several steps, where the child's views being a significant factor.

The strategy to strengthen children's rights, as approved by the Riksdag on December 1, 2010 (see the response to question 2(a)) states that all legislation affecting children should be drawn up in compliance with the CRC, that decision-makers and relevant professional groups should have knowledge about the child's rights and incorporate this knowledge in relevant operations, that actors within various operations affecting children should strengthen the child's rights through cooperation, that up-to-date

knowledge about children's living conditions should form the basis for decisions and prioritisations affecting children, and that decisions and measures affecting children should be monitored and evaluated from a child rights perspective.

The rights of the child have long been part of Sweden's development cooperation, and Sida – The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency – has extensive method support for integrating the rights of the child.

(b) See the responses to questions 2 (a), 4(a), 4(b) and 8.

(c)

Children in care

The provisions on the child's best interests constitute one of the Social Services Act's opening paragraphs (2001:453). In measures relating to children, particular attention should be paid to the child's best interests. In the case of decisions or other actions relating to care or treatment for children, what is considered to be the best for the child should be the deciding factor. In decisions on compulsory care under the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act (1990:52, LVU), what is best for the young person should always be the deciding factor.

The Social Services Act (2001:453) states that the social welfare committee should work to ensure that children and young people grow up under good, secure conditions. The committee should also work closely with residential homes to ensure that children and young people who risk developing unfavourably get the protection and support they need.

In 2020, the inquiry on Social Services of the Future submitted proposals aiming to clarify the child rights perspective in the Social Services Act ((2001:453). The inquiry's proposals are being processed in the Government Offices.

Custody, residence and right of access

As a result of changes proposed in the bill A strengthened child rights' perspective in custody disputes which entered into force on July 1, 2021, the position of children in processes relating to custody, residence and right of

access has been strengthened. For example the Parental Code has been amended so that the child's best interests should be the deciding factor in all issues relating to custody, residence and right of access, not only in decisions on such matters. The changes clarify the broad application of the provisions and the child rights perspective which shall characterise all measures affecting children. The principle of the child's best interests goes hand-in-hand with the child's right to participation. See also the response to question 21(b).

Asylum

The principle of the child's best interests is incorporated into the opening paragraph on the child's best interests in Chapter 1, Section 10 of the Aliens Act (2005:716).

See also the response to question 29(a) on the Act (2016:752) concerning temporary restrictions on granting permanent residence permits in Sweden.

Changes to the Aliens Act (2005:716) came into force on 20 July 2021. The preparatory work included analysing the possible consequences of the proposed changes on children, in relation to both the Aliens Act (2005:716) and the Act (2016:752) concerning temporary restrictions on granting residence permits. The Government deemed that the proposals would bring improvements compared with the Temporary Act, but that some weakening aspects might occur from a child rights perspective compared with returning to the rules of the Aliens Act.

- The Swedish Migration Agency draws up legal positions and legal comments which, where relevant, should highlight the principle of the child's best interests and issues requiring particular attention to children's specific vulnerability and special needs. The Agency has also produced case management support on specific issues relating to assessing children's asylum applications. Because the CRC has become Swedish law, the Agency has produced legal support on the consequences for assessment.

Support for children who are victims and witnesses of crimes

- The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority works in various ways to disseminate information about rights and the opportunities for support and protection to children and young people, and to professionals and non-profit organisations who deal with children

and young people. The Authority has an ongoing assignment from the Government to draw up knowledge support for players, such as social services' family law services, representatives and courts, regarding the needs of children who have witnessed violence and are staying in sheltered accommodation. This assignment shall be reported on by January 29, 2022.

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(d) See the responses to questions 4(b) and 8.

Right to life, survival and development

13. It is worrying that mental ill-health remains a problem among children and young people. In recent years, the Government has carried out several initiatives to strengthen the work relating to mental health and suicide prevention. In 2021, approximately SEK 1.7 billion was allocated through an agreement between central government and SKR within this area. The majority of this funding is targeted at municipalities and regions to strengthen and develop their work. Children and young people are a particularly important target group for this work.

The Government is also carrying out several initiatives to strengthen child and adolescent psychiatry services. This involves targeted funding for regions to improve access and establishing a delegation to help the regions shorten waiting times for care and treatment. The Government has appointed an inquiry to achieve more cohesive, equal care for children and young people.

Initiatives are also being carried out to strengthen primary care, youth guidance centres, pupil health, student healthcare and suicide prevention work. The Government has increased support for civil society organisations – which are often important for children and young people – to promote health and prevent ill-health and suicide. Approximately SEK 70 million has been earmarked for this purpose for 2021.

PHAS and NBHW have been tasked with working with around twenty relevant agencies to submit data for a forthcoming national mental health and suicide prevention strategy. Children and young people are a prioritised target group in this work, which shall be reported on by September 30, 2023. MUCF and PHAS have also been tasked with mapping young people's

perceived mental health and ill-health. This work has a specific focus on young lgbtiq-persons.

During 2021, the Government is setting aside an additional SEK 50 million for efforts to promote mental health and prevent mental ill-health among asylum-seekers and new arrivals, including asylum-seeking and newly arrived children. The Government is also allocating SEK 13 million during 2021 to strengthen civil society's suicide prevention work, with specific funding being directed towards suicide prevention initiatives for lgbtiq-persons.

Since young transpersons are overrepresented in terms of suicidality and self-harm, PHAS has conducted a study of young transpersons' experiences in order to obtain more information and proposals for measures. This is a qualitative interview study with 29 young transpersons aged 16–26. It includes proposals for changes and initiatives to reduce mental ill-health among transpersons. See also the response to question 11(b).

Respect for the views of the child

14.

(a) **The Aliens Act, etc.**

The Aliens Act (2005:716) states that, in cases involving children, particular attention should be paid to their health and development, and to their best interests in general. When the child is affected by a decision, the child's voice should be heard unless this is inappropriate.

The Swedish Migration Agency shall, in accordance with its instruction (2019:502), analyse the consequences for children in relation to decisions or other measures that may affect them. According to the Agency's own guidelines, the right to be heard must be exercised in a manner that protects the child. The Government has tasked the Agency with reporting on measures and the results of work to ensure the child's rights in accordance with the CRC.

The Agency has reported on a number of measures. For example, it has published a legal position on assessing children's best interests and has revised the legal position of children's opinions being heard in migration

cases. The Agency has also developed and implemented method- and case-management support.

The Parental Code

See the response to question 21(b) regarding the child's right to be heard in care disputes.

The Social Service Act

See the response to question 23(a) on proposals from the Social Services of the Future inquiry.

(b) See the response to question 2(c) regarding children's participation.

A national initiative to strengthen democracy

Within the framework of a national initiative during 2020–2021 to strengthen democracy, several agencies and civil society actors have been tasked with carrying out initiatives to strengthen children's ability to share their views and participate in democratic processes. For example, BO has been tasked with strengthening and developing the democracy perspective via its My Rights website – see the response to question 8.

Youth council for the climate, the environment and the work with Stockholm+50

Ahead of the Stockholm+50 high-level meeting in June 2022, the Government is hosting a youth council each term to discuss sustainable development. The aim is to have continuous dialogue with youth organisations in the work involved in Stockholm+50 and in connection with an additional ongoing environmental or climate policy process. Climate change was discussed in autumn 2020, and biodiversity was discussed in spring 2021. The Swedish delegation to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change includes two youth representatives appointed by the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations.

(c) See the response to question 8 regarding the knowledge boost for children's rights.

Specifically on social services staff

The CRC and the child's best interests and right to participation are a starting point for the regulations, general advice and support materials

produced by NBHW, aimed at social services for the support and protection of children and young people.

Specifically on schools

SNAE offers schools support to develop working with children's and pupils' influence and participation within schooling.

C. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8 and 13–17)

Statelessness and nationality

15.

(a) The Citizenship Act (2001:82) was amended on 20 June 20 2021 where certain stateless children and young adults, born in Sweden and having lived in the country for a certain period, are exempted from the previous requirement for a residence permit to be permanent in order to obtain Swedish citizenship.

(b) A child automatically obtains Swedish citizenship at birth if a parent of the child is a Swedish citizen or if a deceased parent of the child was a Swedish citizen at the time of death.

The final report on amended rules in the Citizenship Act, which was submitted in July 2021, included reviewing whether a system should be introduced with automatic acquisition of citizenship for certain stateless children born in Sweden. The inquiry deemed that such a system should not be introduced, because this group can obtain citizenship by application. The report proposes that the provisions on renunciation from Swedish citizenship should be expanded with a requirement for children's consent and that renunciation must not be in conflict with the child's best interests. The report is now being circulated for formal consultations with a final response date of 4 November 2021.

Access to appropriate information

16.(a) In 2017, the Government decided on a national digitalisation strategy for schooling. The overall objective of the strategy is that Swedish schools should lead the way in using the opportunities of digitalisation in the best way to achieve a high level of digital competence among children and pupils, and to promote knowledge development and equivalence. A national action

plan highlights various initiatives and activities that are needed in order to achieve the strategy's objectives by 2022.

The Swedish Media Council is a government agency tasked with working to strengthen children and young people as conscious media users and to protect them against harmful media influence. Its role includes monitoring media developments regarding children and young people and disseminating information and providing guidance on children's and young people's media situation.

(b) The Swedish Police Authority has carried out a number of measures to put in place effective investigation operations for combatting sexual crimes against children. The Authority has i.a. introduced specialist investigation groups for internet-related sexual abuse of children within the regional IT crime centres.

D. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 37(a) and 39)

Torture and other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment

17.(a) Legislative changes came into force on July 1, 2020, involving specific regulation of the following forced measures: restraint using straps, isolation from other patients and restrictions on the right to use electronic communication services for patients under 18. This specific regulation has tightened the conditions for using these forced measures and shortened the time for which they can be used, and has clarified the conditions for extending an agreed forced measure.

How and when SiS may separate young people is detailed in legislation and in SiS's internal regulations. In order that care within SiS can be provided in a safe and secure manner, employees may need to use special authorities in certain cases. These authorities include limiting young people's freedom of movement or contact with the outside world, or measures to control what is brought into the institution. These authorities should only be used if they are in reasonable proportion to the aim of the measures. The most invasive special authority is to keep someone in separation, without the opportunity to meet other young people. Young people can only be kept in separation if they behave violently or are under the influence of intoxicating substances to such an extent that they cannot control themselves.

The Government has tasked IVO with increasing the supervision and analysis of SiS's special residential homes where only young girls are cared for. The reason for this is that abuses of power and serious problems have been noted for young girls placed at SiS's residential homes . This assignment will be reported on in December 2022.

(b) The Government has tasked NBHW with encouraging and strengthening national work to develop and disseminate relevant and up-to-date knowledge, as well as appropriate knowledge support, methods and working practices, to healthcare personnel working with children in psychiatric in-patient care, including psychiatric compulsory care. The final report on this assignment shall be presented by November 30, 2022.

SiS continuously trains its staff on non-violent, non-forceful care methods. Since 2017, SiS has worked with Save the Children Sweden to train its psychologists in trauma-conscious care. SiS also provides training on detecting and preventing suicidal intentions and self-harming behaviour. In order to deal with situations where young people are violent towards themselves or others, all employees undergo a mandatory training programme on conflict management and physical interventions.

(c) According to the Social Services Act, each municipality is responsible for social services within its area, and has ultimate responsibility for individuals receiving the support and assistance they need. Within social services, IVO carries out supervision of the social services case management, how the social services carry out outreach operations and the actual implementation of these initiatives. This means that the Inspectorate also inspects residential care homes for children, young people and adults, including those operated by SiS. Children can report shortcomings and problems to IVO. The Inspectorate shall offer children the opportunity to speak with inspectors when residential care homes are inspected.

Those who are placed in youth remand institutions can appeal all decisions relating to them to the court. Those who are dissatisfied with anything at a youth detention centre always have the right to complain to staff or to one of the agencies that ensure that the centre complies with the law, such as IVO, SSI or the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

Abuse and neglect

18.(a) See the responses to questions 7 and 19(a). According to the Act (2007:606) on investigations to prevent certain injuries and deaths, NBHW shall carry out investigations when a child has been killed or when an adult has been killed by a relative or someone who was previously close to them. The aim of such an investigation is to identify failings in society's safety net and to provide the Government with data for deciding on actions. In 2019, the law was expanded to include cases where a child has been subjected to aggravated assault or exceptional aggravated assault by a relative or someone who was previously close to them.

(b) Exposing a child to violence is criminalised under Swedish law. The Criminal Code also includes grounds for more severe penalties if the accused has, for example, exploited another person's defenceless position or difficulty defending themselves, or whether the offence was liable to damage the security and trust of a child in their relationship with a family member. On 1 July 2021 a new offence, violation of a child's integrity, took effect. It is now an offence against the child to expose him or her to witness certain criminal acts, such as violent and sexual crimes, in a domestic relation. If the offence is gross, the person is guilty of gross violation of a child's integrity.

(c) The main starting point in the legislation to protect children against abuse and neglect is to give the family the necessary support. According to the Social Services Act (2001:453), the social services have a clear responsibility to protect children who come to harm or risk coming to harm. The starting point is that all initiatives for the protection and support of children and young persons should be voluntary. These initiatives should be characterised by respect for the young person's value and integrity. In those cases where children have been exposed to abuse or neglect, the social welfare committee may decide to care for the child outside the home without the guardian's consent. Forced measures shall only be applied where the necessary care cannot be arranged by voluntary means. In order to give vulnerable children and young persons the support and treatment they need, the committee has the option of using force in certain cases in accordance with the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act (1990:52, LVU).

According to the Social Services Act, the child has the right to protection if they are the victim of a crime, and this includes children who have witnessed violence involving a relative. It is the social services in the municipality's

responsibility to ensure that a child who has been exposed to violence, or has witnessed violence by or towards a relative, receives the support and assistance they need. In order for the social services to discover children who need help, anyone who suspects that a child is suffering harm should report their concerns to social services. Certain professionals, such as school and healthcare workers or the police, have a legal obligation to make a report if they become aware or suspect as part of their work that a child is suffering harm.

To support healthcare staff, NBHW has published regulations and general advice on working with violence in close relationships (2014:4). This states that when the social welfare committee becomes aware that a child may have been exposed to violence or other abuse by a relative, or have witnessed violence or other attacks by or against a relative, the committee shall begin an investigation into the child's need for support and assistance without delay. The committee shall also assess the risk of the child being exposed to or witnessing further violence. Those who manage and monitor cases involving children who are exposed to violence and children who have witnessed violence should also know how to hold conversations with children about violence and other attacks, and the possible consequences of a child being exposed to or witnessing violence or other attacks by or against relatives.

(d)

School workers

According to the Social Services Act, school workers have a responsibility to notify the social welfare committee of suspicions that a child aged up to 18 is suffering harm or risks suffering harm. The Government has tasked SNAE and NBHW with carrying out development work for early and coordinated initiatives for children and young people. Specific measures shall be targeted towards risk groups among children and young people in socially vulnerable areas, as well as children and young people who risk being exposed to honour-based violence and oppression.

Employees within social services and healthcare

NBHW has produced a handbook to provide social services and healthcare workers with guidance within this area. This deals with legislation and

preparatory work, as well as knowledge based on research and operational experience.

In 2017, the Government decided to amend the examination descriptions in the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) for programmes such as social worker training, adding mandatory courses on men's violence against women and violence in close relationships.

(e) Each year since 2007, NBHW has allocated development funding and provided national and regional competence support to quality assure work against violence in close relationships within healthcare.

(f) According to the Social Services Act, the municipality has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that children and young people who come to harm or risk coming to harm receive the support and protection they need. Various agencies contribute support and guidance, and carry out inspections to ensure compliance with legislation. The municipality's ultimate responsibility under the Social Services Act for ensuring that children and young people do not come to harm or risk coming to harm also applies to children with disabilities. The Act (1993:387) concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments states that the agency which supervises operations in accordance with the Act must, when carrying out supervision relating to children's circumstances, listen to the child if it can be assumed that the child will not be harmed by such a conversation. The child may be heard without their guardian's consent, and without their guardian being present.

See also the response to question 18(d).

All forms of violence, including sexual exploitation

19.(a) See the response to question 2(c) regarding the inquiry to submit proposals for a national strategy to prevent and combat violence against children. According to the inquiry's directives, the inquiry shall listen to children and young people while developing the strategy and shall take children's views and opinions into account.

(b) Reviewing Child advocacy centres (Barnahus) is part of the directives mentioned in the response to question 19(a).

(c) Initiatives to combat harassment, etc., online

For several years, the Swedish Media Council has been responsible for the No Hate Speech Movement, which aims to improve knowledge about racism, sexism and similar forms of hostility online among children and young people. This has involved producing information materials and educational tools for target groups such as pupils and teachers. The Council has now been tasked with identifying and compiling methods for countering racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crimes on the internet among children and young people.

Initiatives to combat harassment, etc., at school

According to the Education Act (2010:800), school education shall be structured so that all pupils are assured a school environment featuring security and good conditions for studying. The Act states that all school staff have an obligation to actively counteract all forms of harassment.

Intolerance, oppression and violence, such as racism, sexism and honour-based violence and oppression, shall be prevented and combatted with knowledge and active initiatives. The Discrimination Act (2008:567) forbids discrimination in education. SSI and DO monitor compliance with the provisions of the Education Act and the Discrimination Act.

Initiatives to combat hate crimes, etc.

The Swedish Police Authority has raised its ambition level regarding hate crimes and other crimes that threaten the fundamental freedoms and rights. A national contact point has been established for these issues, together with democracy and hate crime groups for the Stockholm, West and South police regions. There shall also be a corresponding capability in the other four police regions. In addition to investigating current crimes, dedicated resources shall also work with crime victim support, internal training, cooperation and other actions to increase safety and confidence. Agencies within areas such as the justice system continue to develop work to combat hate and threats.

The Authority has been tasked by the Government with developing resources on human rights, crimes against democracy and hate crimes, for lower and upper secondary schools, and has produced educational materials with basic information about democracy, the police, and legislation and regulations in Sweden.

See also the responses to questions 20(b), 31(a) and (c) and 32(a) and (d).

(d)

Initiatives by the Swedish Police Authority

In 2016, the Government tasked the Swedish Police Authority with identifying and implementing actions to strengthen and develop the ability to detect, investigate and prevent sexual crimes against children, develop the ability to identify the victims and perpetrators of these crimes, and improve cooperation within the Authority, and with relevant actors both nationally and internationally. Since 2016, the Authority has held specific focus weeks to combat trafficking in human beings (thb) for sexual purposes, procuring, the purchase of sexual services and exploitation of children through the purchase of sexual services, etc. The Authority has also carried out many competence enhancing initiatives, and has had an action plan since 2018 for work to prevent and combat prostitution and thb for all purposes, and to contribute towards better protection and support for those exposed to thb.

Initiatives by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency has a national assignment to coordinate the work to combat all forms of trafficking in human beings (thb), including trafficking in children. The Agency operates the National Task Force against prostitution and human trafficking (NMT), which includes the Swedish Police Authority, the Swedish Prosecution Authority, the Swedish Migration Agency, the Swedish Work Environment Authority, the Swedish Tax Agency and the regional coordinators against prostitution and thb within the social services. A national referral mechanism for victims of thb clarifies how the various actors are responsible within the support process for those exposed to thb, including trafficking in children.

In addition to the Agency's coordination assignment, the Government gave the Agency a specific assignment in September 2019 to strengthen the work to prevent children, young people and adults being used in prostitution and thb, and to map the extent of prostitution and thb for sexual purposes in Sweden. The Agency is also responsible for the Travel Courage (resekurage.se) campaign, encouraging Swedish travellers to report to the police, via a direct link, if they witness suspected sexual exploitation of children when travelling abroad.

Initiatives by social services

Regional coordinators against prostitution and trafficking in human beings (thb) within the social services support the Swedish Gender Equality Agency's national assignment regarding prostitution and thb for all purposes. The coordinators' role includes providing support to professionals in thb cases and function as a regional actor with specialised expertise in thb. They also assist children who have been exposed to thb. The Agency finances a return programme for victims of thb run by the UN's International Organization for Migration, which also assists children in the return process.

Initiatives by BO

In February 2020, the Government tasked BO with mapping knowledge about how children's health and relationships are affected by pornography, and with producing an inventory of methods to strengthen their resistance to negative effects of pornography.

Action plan to combat prostitution and trafficking in human beings

In 2018, the Government adopted an action plan to combat prostitution and trafficking in human beings (thb). The action plan aims to prevent and combat prostitution and thb for all purposes, and to contribute to better protection and support for people who are subjected to thb. One objective is that no child should be exposed to thb, exploitation or sexual abuse.

Specific investigations and focus on improved detection of violence

NBHW carries out regular investigations in accordance with the Act (2007:606) on investigations to prevent certain injuries and deaths. The aim is to provide the Government with data for deciding on actions to prevent children from coming to harm. The requirement for agencies to make experts available for these investigations has also been tightened. In its latest report (2018), NBHW identified several shortcomings in society's work for affected children. Within healthcare, insufficient attention was paid to families' conflict-filled and demanding life situations, and to children's exposure despite knowledge of their parents' problems. Reports of concerns from those who came into contact with the parents were also taken into account far too rarely. NBHW expects to submit its next report in January 2022.

In August 2019, the Government tasked the Swedish Employment Service, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency,

the Swedish Migration Agency and NBHW with working to improve the detection of violence. This assignment will be reported on in March 2022.

The Government intends to appoint an inquiry to consider whether protection for children needs to be strengthened in relation to spending time with a parent who has committed violence or been guilty of some other serious violation. (The Government's package of measures to intensify the work to combat men's violence against women.)

Harmful practices

20. (a)

National knowledge support on intersexualism

NBHW has been tasked by the Government with producing knowledge support for the healthcare profession on care and treatment in the case of intersexualism. Intersexualism is part of the larger number of congenital conditions under the medical classification disorders of sex development (DSD, also referred to as differences in sex development). The knowledge support published in March 2020 intends to strengthen the child's rights and to contribute towards greater restrictiveness regarding surgical interventions. NBHW has also produced information for patients and relatives, including targeted information for children and young people.

(b)

Initiatives by the Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Prosecution Authority

Work with honour-related crime is a prioritised issue within the Swedish Police Authority, and is part of the special incentive on particularly vulnerable victims of crime. The police have had a national competence network for honour-related crime since 2017, and new method support has been produced. Method support has also been produced for prosecutors to use when dealing with cases of honour-related crime, forced marriage, child marriage and female genital mutilation. Specific honour-related crime prosecutors have been appointed at all public prosecution offices and at the National Unit against International and Organised Crime to deal with these types of cases. The Swedish Prosecution Authority has also appointed a subject specialist with responsibility for honour-related crime. This specialist will lead a national network of the specially appointed honour-related based crime prosecutors. For several years, the Authority has offered further

training on issues such as forced marriage and genital mutilation. The Swedish Prosecution Authority's Development Centre has a prosecutor with specific responsibility for honour-related crime, including forced marriage and genital mutilation.

Initiatives by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency

The Government has tasked the Swedish Gender Equality Agency with inventorying effective working methods for changing attitudes and behaviours towards genital mutilation of women and girls and disseminating these to relevant actors. Relevant operations include leisure activities, open youth activities and forums, and civil society.

Initiatives by Barnafriid

Since 2018, Barnafriid carries out education efforts regarding honour-based violence and oppression and its various forms of expression such as child marriage, forced marriage and genital mutilation for Sweden's child advocacy centres, and with compiling and disseminating these centres' experiences of investigating honour-based crime. The final report on this assignment will be presented by January 31, 2022.

Legislation against child marriage and honour-based violence and oppression

On 1 July 2020 a specific child marriage offence and a new ground for more severe penalties targeting criminal offences where honour is a motive was introduced. Also a travel ban on leaving the country for children at risk of being taken abroad to enter into child marriage or genital mutilation was introduced. The report on a specific honour-based offence proposes i.a. the introduction of a specific honour-based offence. This proposal is being processed in the Government Offices.

Asylum and citizenship

See the response to question 15(b). The final report on amended rules in the Citizenship Act proposes provisions on conditions for children's renunciation of Swedish citizenship. This should not come into conflict with the child's best interests, and consent should be given by children who have turned 12. The aim is to strengthen children's rights in these cases, and to increase the opportunities to counteract honour-based violence or coercion, (e) g. in situations where the child risks being exposed to genital mutilation or child marriage.

The Swedish Migration Agency has been tasked with providing a mandatory oral societal introduction for all asylum-seekers over the age of 15 by 1 October 2021. This information should include Swedish legislation on honour-based violence and oppression, including issues of child marriage and genital mutilation. Adapted written information shall be given to children in families under the age of 15 and to unaccompanied migrant children. An individual discussion shall be held with unaccompanied migrant children.

E. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9–11, 18 (1) and (2), 20, 21, 25 and 27 (4))

Family environment

21.(a) One of the Government's stated objectives for its economic family policy is gender-equal parenting. As part of this, the Government appointed an inquiry in 2016 to review parental insurance, submitting its final report in 2017. The inquiry's proposals are being processed by the Government Offices.

The Government has also amended the parental insurance regulations to allow the father/non-pregnant parent to take paid parental leave to accompany the other parent to maternity care during pregnancy. The aim is to involve fathers with their children at an early stage, thereby increasing the likelihood of them taking more responsibility as parents.

In August 2018, the Government decided on a new national strategy for stronger parental support to promote children's health and development. This support shall be based on the child's rights and shall be equal and gender equal. The child rights perspective, gender-equal parenting and equality in health are fundamental and characterise the strategy.

(b) According to the Parental Code, the best interests of the child should be decisive in all matters relating to custody, residence and right of access. The child's opinions shall be ascribed importance in relation to the child's age and maturity. As a result of changes proposed in the bill A strengthened child rights perspective in custody disputes which entered into force on July 1, 2021, children's position, right to information and right to be heard in processes relating to custody, residence and right of access have been strengthened. For example, the social welfare committee can listen to a child

during such a process without the guardian's consent and without the guardian being present. These changes mean that more children and younger children can participate in the process, which may result in details of exposure to violence emerging and being dealt with in more cases. Several of the other legislative changes also aim to support children who are at risk harm. For example, a possibility has been introduced in certain cases, such as when one guardian has killed the other parent, for courts to transfer the custody of a child to a temporary guardian.

(c) When assessing what is best for the child, the risk of the child or another family member being abused, unlawfully being abducted or detained, or otherwise harmed should be taken into particular account. The court and the social welfare committee must thus always consider whether there is a risk that the child will come to harm and must in these cases make a risk assessment. In 2018, the Family Law and Parental Support Authority was tasked by the Government with drawing up case management support for risk assessment in investigations into custody, residence and right of access.

In 2020, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency and the Family Law and Parental Support Authority were tasked with investigating how information about violence and other abuse is taken into account in custody rulings. This assignment shall be reported in December 2021.

Children deprived of a family environment

22.(a) The child's best interests are included in the opening paragraph of the Social Services Act, and investigations into children who are suspected of coming to harm should be based on this principle. Assessments of the support and protection that a child might need should be based on a social investigation of what is best for the individual child. Children's Needs in Focus is a working method devised for social services, aiming to strengthen the perspective of the child and participation for children and young people in the investigation of the individual.

(b) The social welfare committee has the ultimate responsibility for all children developing favourably, and for them receiving the support and assistance they need, based on what is deemed to be best for the individual child and their situation. The committee should carry out an individual assessment of whether a child with a parent in custody needs support or protection.

The national strategy for stronger parental support highlights the availability of support for parents in custody.

The Government has earmarked funding each year in the Swedish Prison and Probation Service's appropriation directions for government grants to non-profit organisations, allowing for increased grants to organisations working to raise awareness of and improve conditions for children whose parents are receiving correctional treatment.

(c) The social welfare committee in each municipality is responsible for recruiting and investigating family homes, offering them training and ensuring that they provide good quality care. SKR has produced support and guidance for case managers and decision-makers within municipalities for cases relating to paying compensation to family homes.

When a placement ends, the committee shall meet the specific need for support and assistance that may exist after care outside the home has ended. The main principle is that social services shall work to reunite children and their parents. An assessment of what is most appropriate should always be carried out based on the child's best interests. Cooperation with other areas such as education and healthcare is important in order for children and parents to receive the right support.

See also the response to question 2(c).

F. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

23.(a)

Legislation

According to the Act (1993:387) concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments (LSS), the child's best interests shall be taken into account when measures relate to children. When a measure relates to a child, the child should receive relevant information and be given the opportunity to share its views. NBHW's regulations and general advice include a requirement to document the child's best interests and right to be involved. See also the response to question 14(a).

Knowledge and method support

NBHW has drawn up knowledge support about talking to children, aimed at staff who come into contact with and talk to children within social services, healthcare and dental care. This knowledge support especially highlights children with disabilities.

To ensure that children with disabilities are given equal opportunities within the legal system, the Swedish Police Authority uses a scientifically tested method of interrogation. Cooperation has also been developed with municipalities and county councils within the framework of Barnahus. At a Barnahus, planning takes place in connection with the specific needs of the individual child, and police employees can receive planning support from both social workers and psychologists.

SNAE provides a skills development initiative regarding participation, influence and equal treatment through collegial learning. The initiative relates to pupils' opportunities for participation and influence in teaching (compulsory school and upper secondary school) and to the school's obligation to ensure equal rights and opportunities for all pupils, regardless of their functional capacity (compulsory school and upper secondary school, and equivalent school forms).

Child panels

The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools is one of the agencies working actively to involve children in its operations as part of ongoing work to develop the child rights perspective. The Agency has a child panel to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard within its area of operations. The aim is that children's opinions and experiences should be taken into account in the Agency's work.

Monitoring

In accordance with an assignment from the Government, NBHW has monitored how the principle of the child's best interests is taken into account in assessments, decisions and initiative planning in accordance with LSS. The final report shows that the child's best interests are not taken into account to a sufficient extent. A lack of knowledge about the consequences of disability and how to talk to children who have communication difficulties is making this work more difficult. The investigation has also revealed a lack of access to communication tools. At the same time, it has

been clear in the monitoring work that there is great commitment and interest within the municipalities in developing work with children's rights.

Every year, IVO shall submit a summary analysis of its supervisory operations. The report *What IVO has seen in 2019* explains that children and young people with disabilities have better opportunities to describe their own needs when the home works with augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Around 90% of operations had staff with competence within AAC, or had carried out related training. 10% of homes thus do not have the required knowledge of AAC, or do not use AAC fully, despite children and young people needing it.

(b)

Personal assistance, short-term stays away from home and care allowances

Children with disabilities covered by the Act (1993:387) concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments are entitled to certain specific measures, including personal assistance. Personal assistance is thus regulated by law, and is thereby rights-based. The Government has appointed an inquiry tasked with taking a position on whether parental responsibility when assessing children's right to personal assistance can be clarified and narrowed through clarifications in knowledge support, for example, or whether changes are needed in the regulation of parental responsibility within personal assistance. The inquiry submitted its report to the Government in May, 2021. The report has been circulated for comments.

Support for the parents of children with disabilities can also be given in the form of short-term stays away from home and care allowances based on the care and supervision that the child needs over and above what is normal for children of the same age without disabilities.

Assistive devices

Assistive devices are prescribed within healthcare at both regional and municipal levels. School organisers are responsible for educational assistive devices. NBHW has been tasked by the Government with sharing examples of agreements between school organisers and healthcare organisers that aim to ensure that children with disabilities have their needs for assistive devices met. The Swedish Agency for Participation has been tasked by the

Government to promote an active leisure for persons with disabilities by publishing concrete advice for municipalities and other organisations.

Coordination

In order to achieve better coordination of support for children with disabilities, NBHW has been tasked by the Government with producing knowledge support aimed at municipalities and county councils with their responsibilities for social services and healthcare. The knowledge support aims to help parents to access effective support, while also ensuring that the parents' efforts in connection with a child's needs are manageable. Children's access to support is currently too dependent on parents' resources for finding and seeking such support. This risks leading to unequal access to care, treatment and support.

(c) According to the Education Act, all pupils shall be given the leadership and stimulation they need in their learning and their personal development, in accordance with the objectives of education. Pupils who have difficulties achieving the requirements as a result of a disability shall be given support that aims – as far as possible – to counter the consequences of their disability. Children who cannot attend compulsory school or compulsory special school due to their disability or for other specific reasons should be given a place at a special school. Special school is not a mandatory measure. Instead, it is an opportunity that pupils and their guardians can apply for.

(d) The Government has taken actions to train and employ more special needs teachers and special needs educators and is developing the competence of special education teachers in order to improve special education competence in schools generally. Those studying for degrees as special needs teachers and special needs educators shall have knowledge of neuropsychiatric difficulties and shall be able to apply their knowledge in different learning environments. In September 2020, the Government decided on new examination targets for teacher training courses to ensure that schools are better placed to deal with children and pupils with neuropsychiatric difficulties. Since July 2019, there has been a guarantee of early support measures with the aim that schools should identify and support pupils who need these measures as early as preschool.

(e) See the response to question 7 (b).

G. Basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 24, 26, 27 (1)–(3) and 33)

Health, including mental health, and health services

24.(a) The Government's combined initiatives within fields such as the labour market and education, as well as initiatives within economic family policy and social policy, involve measures which – as a whole – help to reduce economic vulnerability among families with children, and thus negative health developments.

Healthcare operations are governed by law and shall offer every citizen – regardless of where in the country they live – services of equal quality. The fundamental rule is thus that all children should be offered healthcare on equal terms, regardless of where they live. This also applies to asylum-seeking and children newly arrived in Sweden, and to children avoiding the enforcement of a decision on refusal of entry or deportation.

(b) During 2018–2020, the Government has encouraged broad development work on child healthcare through agreements with SKR. Within the framework of these agreements, SEK 120 million per year has been assigned to the regions to improve access to child healthcare services. This has included providing advice and support on injury prevention measures, breastfeeding and other topical issues relating to children's long-term health. NBHW and PHAS have been tasked by the Government with encouraging and strengthening the child healthcare work within areas such as breastfeeding. The Government has tasked the Swedish Food Agency with coordinating the national work relating to breastfeeding.

(c) See the response to question 13. The funding within the agreement between central government and SKR in relation to mental health can be used to develop support for children, including children with disabilities who suffer from psychosomatic and psychiatric problems, and their families.

(d) In connection with the 2020 Research Bill titled Research, freedom, future – knowledge and innovation for Sweden the Government decided to establish a national research programme for mental health (from 2022 onwards) and a research focus on psychiatric research (from 2021 onwards). These programmes may include research on diagnostics for children.

(e) See the response to question 13. The funding within the agreement between central government and SKR in relation to mental health can be used to develop support for children and their parents and teachers in connection with ADHD and other neuropsychiatric disabilities.

(f) See the response to question 13.

Standard of living

25.(a) See the response to question 2(b). The Government has also raised the basic level of parental insurance, strengthening households with low or no earned income. In other measures, the Government has raised maintenance support on several occasions and introduced age differentiation to better match costs for children of different ages.

Assistance for asylum-seekers for day-to-day life (daily allowance) is set by the Act (1994:137) on the Reception of Asylum Seekers, etc., and the Ordinance (1994:361) on the Reception of Asylum Seekers, etc. The regulations also provide for special grants for costs arising as a result of specific needs. These special grants can relate to costs that are necessary for a tolerable life, such as costs for winter clothing, spectacles, dietary supplements, disability equipment and equipment for babies.

(b) The Government has tasked the county administrative boards with supporting the municipalities in their work to prevent evictions of families with children. The Swedish Enforcement Administration has produced method support to assist housing companies and municipalities in their work to prevent evictions.

(c) The social welfare committee is responsible for working to ensure that children and young people grow up under secure conditions, which involves preventive work. In cases where children and young people risk coming to harm, the committee is responsible for them receiving the protection and support they need. Social services conduct outreach field operations, particularly in large cities, in which social workers try to support and help children who spend time outdoors, especially during the evenings and at night.

Between 2018 and 2021, NBHW allocated funding each year to the municipalities with the most people in acute homelessness. This funding aimed to strengthen the municipalities' work to combat homelessness and

exclusion from the housing market and has i.a. been used for housing guides who support families with children in uncertain living situations.

Impact of climate change on the rights of the child

26.(a) Sweden reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 29% during 1990–2020. The main actions that have contributed towards the overall reduction in emissions are the expansion of the district heating network and the transition from oil-fired boilers to electricity and district heating, and greater use of biofuel within industry. Sweden has a goal of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, and negative emissions thereafter. In order to achieve this, Sweden has adopted a Climate Act, a climate policy action plan for each mandate period and a climate policy council which reviews the Government's policies. There are also government investment programmes such as the Industry Leap and the Climate Leap. Sweden has a goal of using 100% renewable energy by 2040. Examples include measures to promote greater use of electric vehicles and sustainable, renewable biofuel, and to facilitate innovations to reduce industrial process emissions through targeted support.

(b) One example of how Sweden works jointly with businesses to address the climate issue is Fossil Free Sweden. Fossil Free Sweden is a platform for dialogue and collaboration between businesses, municipalities and other actors who want Sweden to be fossil free. Fossil Free Sweden works to accelerate the climate transition and helps the private sector to develop roadmaps for becoming fossil free by 2045. In this way, Fossil Free Sweden works not only to address climate impact, but also to prevent it.

H. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28–31)

Education

27.(a) The Swedish education system is based on the principle of inclusion. All children and pupils in all forms of schooling and at leisure-time centres should do as well as possible based on their own circumstances in accordance with the objectives of education. All pupils living in Sweden have the right to teaching at preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school. Newly arrived pupils are entitled to various means of support that are designed to meet their needs and conditions. Pupils who have difficulties achieving the various knowledge requirements or requirement levels as a

result of a disability shall be given support that aims as far as possible to counter the consequences of their disability.

The reading, writing and maths guarantee came into effect on July 1, 2019, and is aimed at preschool and primary school pupils. The aim is to clearly identify and give the right support to pupils who need it. The Special Education for Learning Initiative began in 2016 and aims to strengthen the special education competence of teachers and preschool teachers. In September 2020, the Government decided on new examination targets for teacher training courses to ensure that schools are better placed to deal with children and pupils with neuropsychiatric difficulties.

The Sami School Board provides Sami teaching from preschool to year 6, remote teaching and integrated teaching.

A growing percentage of government economic support for schools is now divided up according to needs, which means that the school organisers with the greatest socioeconomic challenges receive proportionally larger grants. The government grant for stronger equality and equivalence and knowledge development was increased in 2021 to just over SEK 6.2 billion. School organisers that establish career paths for teachers in preschool class and compulsory school at schools with particularly tough socioeconomic conditions can receive additional grants to attract qualified and experienced teachers. There are government initiatives aimed directly at those school organisers and schools with the greatest need to improve their ability to contribute towards pupils' knowledge development.

From 2021 onwards, there is a targeted initiative for improved working environments and working conditions for teachers at certain schools facing socioeconomic challenges. By strengthening language development work in preschools, children can be given more equal conditions before starting school. The government support for better language development in preschools was therefore strengthened in 2021.

(b) The inquiry on more equal schools submitted its report on more equal schools, reduced school segregation and improved resource allocation in April 2020. The report is currently being processed in the Government Offices.

(c) A new provision was added to the Education Act (2010:800) on July 1, 2018, whereby if a pupil has repeated or extended absence from school, the head teacher – regardless of whether or not the absence is justified – ensures that the absence is investigated promptly if it is not unnecessary. In matters relating to pupils who are obliged to attend school, the home municipality shall, if necessary, coordinate actions with societal institutions, organisations or other relevant bodies.

SKR is running a project, Assignment: completed education, to achieve more cohesive, sustainable national work so that a greater proportion of young people can complete upper secondary education. The Government is co-financing this work with SEK 8 million in 2021.

(d) School has a democratic task. Pupils should learn about democracy and human rights. They should also learn through fundamental democratic values and respect for human rights characterising the school's learning environment. The aim is that they should develop abilities to participate actively in democracy as social citizens. Both the overall democracy task as well as teaching about sex and reproductive health include principles of non-discrimination and individual freedom and rights, including issues of sexual orientation and combating restrictive gender norms. The school shall act actively against degrading treatment, including on the internet.

(e) Since the 2015/16 academic year, a government grant has been paid to preschool organisers to reduce the size of groups of children at preschool, and thus improve quality and goal fulfilment.

The national school development programmes have been expanded to allow for increased skills development initiatives for preschool staff through continuous and systematic collegial further training since 2017.

SNAE has been tasked by the Government with working in dialogue with school organisers to carry out initiatives to enhance preschool's goal fulfilment and to increase equivalence within and between preschool units.

The Government has carried out initiatives to create more places for preschool teacher education. However, the educational institutions have not yet managed to expand to the extent that they have received funding for.

(f) SSI's task is to ensure that school organisers run their operations in accordance with legislation and ordinances, through inspections and application assessments.

(g) According to the Education Act, in-school teaching is the general rule. During the COVID-19 pandemic, specific fixed-term exceptions have been introduced, allowing school organisers to use remote and distance teaching to a greater extent than usual under certain circumstances, in order to ensure that pupils' right to education is met.

In April 2020, SNAE was tasked by the Government with supporting schooling during the pandemic. SNAE has produced and disseminated informative examples of how this work can be organised with support from the Ordinance (2020:115) on education within schooling and other pedagogical operations in the event of the spread of certain infections, other provisions relating to schooling and other pedagogical operations, and PHAS's recommendations and regulations in connection with COVID-19. The support from SNAE and the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools has involved how different aspects of school's areas of responsibility will continue to operate and meet pupils' needs during the impact of the pandemic.

Rest, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities

28. The Sports Ombudsman – a function within the Swedish Sports Confederation since 2018 – provides advice and guidance, and investigates cases involving suspected offences with the support of internal experts.

The Government has tasked the Swedish Research Council for Sport Science with carrying out an in-depth analysis of how the sports movement can work to improve its management, openness and democratic functioning. The report has been submitted, and highlights that ongoing measures should be carried out to reach children and young people among groups within society who only participate in associations to a limited extent.

(a) Leisure activities in general

MUCF has been tasked with working to ensure that young people have meaningful, stimulating leisure activities. In recent years, MUCF has

provided support for open leisure activities (youth recreation centres, youth centres, etc.) by carrying out awareness-raising initiatives.

Sport

The Government has created a programme of reforms to reduce segregation and is supporting the inclusion of the sports movement in this. The sports movement's initiatives involve forming new associations or strengthening existing ones in segregated areas, thereby making activities possible for more sports and youth leaders in socially vulnerable areas. In order to create permanence and self-sufficiency of leaders, the intention is to offer accommodation in these areas, training in association knowledge and leadership development.

The Swedish Sports Confederation's focus on sport in segregated areas began in 2017. By 2020, work was underway or being finalised in a total of 50 districts and areas across 22 municipalities in 13 counties. Work is therefore being carried out in parallel in several districts to create the right conditions for establishing new associations and sections in the long term.

Culture

Children and young people are a prioritised target group within cultural policy, as stated in the national cultural policy objectives. All agencies and the majority of the bodies assigned government grants shall integrate a child and youth perspective into their operations. Examples include the grant-awarding Swedish Arts Council, where around 60% of grants are for activities for children and young people.

Since 2008, the Government has allocated grants for cultural activities at schools. By targeting schools, this grant can benefit all children, regardless of their background. The Government's 2021 Budget Bill included additional funding.

Municipal cultural schools play a fundamental role for children's and young people's equal access to culture and help to lay the foundation for children's and young people's creative development by allowing them to take part in a number of different art forms.

(b) Swedish sport is working to introduce norm-conscious perspectives into operations at different levels and in its own training, including within the

framework of gender mainstreaming, where other norms and power structures are also incorporated to ensure an intersectoral perspective. Raising awareness of the impact of heteronorms and cishnorms on sporting environments is an important aspect of the educational initiatives.

I. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37(b)–(d) and 38–40)

Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children

29.(a) See the responses to questions 12(c) and 14(a). The Act (2016:752) concerning temporary restrictions on granting residence permits – the validity of which was extended in 2019 – ceased to apply on July 20, 2021. In connection with the extension of the period of validity, the Government's proposals were circulated for comment. Several referral bodies issued statements on the consequences for children and young people, e.g. regarding fixed-term residence permits.

(b) There are still problems concerning unaccompanied migrant children who disappear and risk being exposed to various forms of exploitation, despite implemented measures. Until 2020 the NBHW had the task of running a national knowledge centre for issues concerning unaccompanied migrant children and young people. Stockholm County Administrative Board coordinated the county administrative boards' work in connection with unaccompanied migrant children who disappear during 2016–2017. National mapping with proposed measures was drawn up at the Government's request. In 2018, the county administrative boards produced uniform regional procedures for working with unaccompanied migrant children who disappear. Reports and support materials have been published for target groups such as municipalities and conservators. The Swedish Migration Agency has compiled information about trafficking in human beings (thb) aimed at conservators of unaccompanied migrant children, to raise awareness of the signs of thb and to encourage reporting suspicions.

(c) Child-specific persecution and the child's best interests: See also the responses to questions 12(c) and 14(a). There are no Swedish legal provisions on child-specific persecution, but such persecution can constitute grounds for granting a residence permit application in accordance with the general provisions on the need for protection in the Aliens Act. The general

grounds for protection shall be applied for both adults and children. In 2020, the Swedish Migration Agency issued a legal position on assessing children's best interests, including examples of child-specific grounds for asylum and child-specific persecution.

Children in compulsory care: The Swedish Migration Agency has issued a legal position on conflicts between asylum-seeking children, conservators, public counsels and guardians.

(d) Anyone who is appointed as an administrator must be righteous, experienced and otherwise suitable. Before someone is appointed, a suitability assessment shall be carried out and special emphasis must be placed on the child's vulnerable situation. One circumstance to be taken into consideration is whether the intended representative already has many assignments and whether there is a risk that he or she may find it difficult to carry out an additional assignment. The municipality's chief guardian has a responsibility to ensure that administrators are receiving the education they need.

A report on administrators and special representatives was submitted to the Government in 2021. The report includes many proposals to create better conditions for competent people to put themselves forward as representatives, increasing the education and giving representatives better and more professional support in their assignment.

(e) The Swedish Migration Agency's instruction states that the Agency shall analyse the consequences before making decisions or taking other actions that affect children and working to ensure that case management times are as short as possible for residence permit cases. The Agency has been tasked with prioritising applications from unaccompanied migrant children so that they can be given a decision quickly. According to its remit, the Agency shall specifically report on how it ensures that children's own grounds for asylum are investigated, assessed and reported on in this decision. The Agency has drawn up methods for monitoring the quality of asylum cases, and for analysing changes to decisions made by a court. See also the response to question 12(c).

(f) In June 2020, the Government appointed an inquiry chair to review the method of medical age assessments applied by the National Board of Forensic Medicine within the asylum process. The aim is to strengthen the

basis for the degree of certainty with which it can be assessed whether people of unknown age are likely to be over or under 18 using the method applied by the Board. An interim report shall be submitted by October 29, 2021. The final report will be presented in 2024.

Administration of child justice

30.(a) The Code of Judicial Procedure states that when someone is arrested or detained, or when a warrant for arrest is issued in the absence of the suspect, they must be informed of the crime they are suspected of and the grounds for detention. This means that the notification must be issued at the time of detention. The person who is detained or remanded in custody is entitled to be informed of the circumstances forming the basis for the decision to do so.

(b) Cases against those who are under 21 shall always be dealt with promptly in accordance with the Young Offenders (Special Provisions) Act. Decisions on prosecutions regarding crimes that can result in a custodial sentence shall be made as soon as possible and no later than within six weeks from the date of the suspected crime being announced. This time limit can only be exceeded, if necessary, in view of the nature of the investigation or other specific circumstances.

Those who are under 18 may only be remanded in custody if there are exceptional reasons under the same act. If it could be feared due to the suspect's age that being remanded could be seriously detrimental for the suspect, this may only take place if it is clear that adequate supervision cannot be arranged. Those who are under 18 are always deemed to suffer serious detriment on being remanded in custody, and this should therefore be avoided to the greatest possible extent. The opportunity to replace being remanded in custody with other measures should have been examined thoroughly before a young person is remanded in custody. Those who are under 18 shall thus only be remanded in custody in exceptional circumstances. When the court makes such a decision and charges have not yet been brought, it shall state the time within which charges will be brought. This must not be longer than is absolutely necessary. As a general rule, the court shall hold a detention hearing at a maximum interval of two weeks.

(c) Since July 1, 2021, the maximum time for which suspects under 18 may be remanded in custody has been three months. This time limit may be

exceeded if there are exceptional reasons, e.g. if the suspected crime is particularly difficult to investigate because it is part of organised or gang-related crime.

(d) A public defence counsel shall always be appointed unless it is obvious that the young person has no need for a defence counsel in accordance with the Young Offenders (Special Provisions) Act. For example, a suspect may not need a defence counsel in the case of petty crimes or in cases where prosecution or summary punishment will probably be announced. If the young person is detained, it is never deemed obvious that there is no need for a defence counsel.

Children who are victims and witnesses of crimes

31.(a)

Barnahus

Barnahus is a form of cooperation within many Swedish municipalities where prosecutors, the police, social services and healthcare work together in connection with children and young people aged 0–18 who are suspected to have been exposed to crimes. The aim is to give the children and young people the help they need through relevant agencies working together.

Training

The police work continuously to improve the support of victims. For example, issues relating to victims of crime are a common underlying theme in basic police training and in various types of further training. In 2019, the Swedish Police Authority launched a specific initiative on vulnerable victims of crime in relation to crimes such as rape, crimes in close relationships, and crimes of violence and sexual crimes against children. This focus has involved intensified efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of investigations, and increased training.

Legal assistants

In most cases, children who are victims of crime are entitled to a legal counsel. This counsel is called a special representative or a counsel for the injured party. A special representative, who is appointed when there is a conflict of interests between the guardians and the child, can be appointed regardless of the suspected offence. In other cases, a counsel for the injured party is appointed. In the case of sexual crimes, there is a very

strong presumption that a counsel for the injured party should be appointed, and this shall be done as soon as a preliminary investigation has been initiated. In cases crimes of violence, the circumstance that the victim is a child means that a counsel, as a general rule, should be appointed.

The counsel for an injured party or the special representative looks after the victim's interests in the case and gives the victim support and assistance. The counsel for an injured party or the special representative also assists the victim in bringing a claim for damages, where such assistant is not provided by the prosecutor. If a convicted perpetrator cannot pay damages and the victim does not have insurance which covers the damage, the victim may receive compensation from the state – known as injury compensation – in certain cases. Children who are exposed to crimes are always entitled to apply for injury compensation up until their 21st birthday.

Specific procedures for questioning children

Children under the age of fifteen are in practice never questioned directly in court. Children are normally questioned during the preliminary investigation by a specially trained officer and the interview is recorded on video, which is then played during the trial. If a party requests a witness examination in court with a child under the age of fifteen, the court must assess whether or not the child may be questioned as a witness. The court may reject such a request, e.g. if it is deemed that the child may be harmed by being questioned in a courtroom. If a child is questioned in a trial, the questioning may take place behind closed doors under certain conditions.

Witness support

A victim who will be questioned in a trial may be accompanied by a person who provides personal support. Witnesses and victims can obtain help from witness support services in the courts. Witness support is provided by volunteers who helps witnesses and victims with human support and practical information in connection with legal proceedings. The witness support can explain the procedure and provide information about matters such as compensation and taking the oath. The witness support can also assist with information about other support measures.

(b) According to the Decree on Preliminary Investigations, preliminary investigations where the suspect was under 18 at the time of notification

must be carried out particularly promptly if the crime was directed against the victims life, health, liberty or peace, and if a custodial sentence of more than six months is prescribed for the crime. The preliminary investigation must be completed and a decision on prosecution made as soon as possible, and within three months from the time when someone is reasonably suspected of the crime. This time limit can only be exceeded if justified in view of the nature of the investigation or other specific circumstances. In many cases where children are victims, the perpetrator is also a minor, which – according to the Young Offenders Act – means that the preliminary investigation and the trial must be dealt with promptly and, in certain cases, within strict timeframes. See also the response to question 30(b).

(c) Crimes against children and sexual crimes are prioritised areas for the Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Prosecution Authority.

The Swedish Police Authority

The ongoing expansion of the Swedish Police Authority has enabled the Authority to strengthen its resources for working with crimes of violence and sexual crimes against children. The Authority has launched an initiative on particularly vulnerable victims. During 2020, around 350 new investigators were recruited with a focus on sexual crimes, crimes in close relationships and crimes against children. This involves the Authority paying increased attention to ensuring that the available method support is followed in investigations, e.g. regarding early evidence preservation and interrogation.

According to its appropriation direction for 2021, the Authority shall report on how crime investigation work and its results have developed in relation to crimes against children. The Government has also requested specific report on this development and the work regarding internet-related sexual crimes against children. In addition, the Authority shall report on the continued development work being carried out to improve the conditions for solving crimes with honour-related motives, forced marriage and child marriage crimes, and shall increase its competence regarding these crimes and thus contribute to strengthen the entire legal chain.

The Swedish Prosecution Authority

Work is taking place within the Swedish Prosecution Authority to counteract slow handling of individual cases, and statutory periods regarding crimes against children being registered, monitored and adhered to are being

followed up. To ensure that prosecutors know about recommendations and best working methods, an annual experience seminar is held. Prosecutors' basic training includes a section on crimes against children and sexual abuse against adults, IT crimes and international issues. The Authority has produced various handbooks and method support that are available to all prosecutors, including guidance on questioning children and persons with disabilities. The Authority has also worked with the Swedish Police Authority on a working method to improve the quality of dealing of cases of crimes against children.

See the response to question 16 (b).

J. Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

32.(a) Sexual offences legislation

Some of the Swedish provisions on sexual crimes against children relate to acts committed against someone who is under 15 and some relate to acts committed against someone who is under 18. The differences should be viewed against the background that the age of sexual consent in Sweden is 15.

When it comes to children under 15, it is punishable as rape of a child or sexual assault of a child or, in the most serious cases, as gross rape of a child or gross sexual assault of a child, to perform a sexual act with the child regardless of whether the child participated voluntarily in the sexual act or not. This therefore means that there is no requirement for the child to have consented to the sexual act. The provision on rape of a child was amended on July 1, 2018, when the minimum penalty was raised. At the same time, it was clarified in the preparatory works that the provisions on i.e. rape of a child and sexual assault of a child, also cover situations where the victim performs a sexual act on themselves or the act is carried out by a third party. The crime can thus be carried out remotely, e.g. online.

Swedish law includes a provision on freedom from responsibility for certain sexual acts against children under 15, if it is obvious that the act did not involve an assault on the child in view of particularly the slight difference in age and development between the person who committed the act and the child. In order for the provision on freedom from responsibility to be

applicable, the child must be close to the age of sexual consent, the person who committed the act must have been only slightly older and only slightly more mature, and the child must have participated in the sexual act entirely voluntarily.

It is also punishable as rape of a child, gross rape of a child, sexual assault of a child and gross sexual assault of a child to perform a sexual act with a child between the ages of 15 and 18 who is the perpetrator's descendant, or is being brought up by or has a comparable relationship with the perpetrator, or for whose care or supervision the perpetrator is responsible by decision of a public authority.

In other cases where the child is over 15, since July 1, 2018 the boundary for punishable actions is whether or not participation in a sexual activity is voluntary. To perform a sexual act with someone who does not participate voluntarily is punishable as rape or sexual assault, or in the most serious cases as gross rape or gross sexual assault. The perpetrator is thus not required to have used any means such as violence or threat, or to have exploited the victim's particularly vulnerable situation or position of dependence, in order to be sentenced for rape or sexual assault. On July 1, 2018, the minimum penalty for gross rape was also raised. At the same time, a specific liability for negligence was introduced for rape and sexual assault. In accordance with the new regulations, a perpetrator who commits an act referred to in the provision on rape or sexual assault and who is negligent regarding the circumstance that the other person is not participating voluntarily is sentenced for negligent rape or negligent sexual assault.

In addition to the general provisions on sexual crimes against children, there are also provisions that are specifically aimed at the exploitation of a child for sexual posing and grooming. On January 1, 2018, the criminal liability for the crime of contact with a child for sexual purposes (grooming) was extended. It is now an offence to – with the aim of committing certain sexual offences against a child under fifteen years of age – propose or agree to a meeting with the child. Thus, it is not necessary that the perpetrator takes any further actions to promote that such a meeting takes place. In 2018 the maximum punishment for the crime was increased.

On May 1, 2020 the statute of limitation for e.g. rape of children was abolished. This also applies to crimes committed before the change in

legislation, as long as they were not already barred by the statute of limitation.

An inquiry chair has been tasked with reviewing the scale of penalties for sexual offences and submitting proposals for changes that may be required in order for these to reflect the seriousness of the crime to a sufficient extent. The investigator submitted a report on June 1, 2021.

The Government intends to appoint an inquiry to review the protection under criminal law for children aged 15–17 against sexual violations, particularly in relation to purchasing sex. (The Government’s package of measures to intensify the work to combat men’s violence against women.)

Child pornography offences

Sweden has very extensive criminalisation of all imaginable dealings with child pornography images, including looking at images one has gained access to. This criminalisation applies to all kinds of images, both in print and on film or on the internet. Drawn images are also covered by the prohibition.

According to Swedish law, the ban on depicting or possessing child pornography does not apply to a person who produces a pornographic image of a child, if the difference in age and development between the depicted person and the person who produces the image is slight and if the other circumstances do not require that responsibility be assigned. The person who depicts the child in a pornographic image may only be slightly older and only slightly more mature. If the depicted child has been improperly influenced to allow themselves to be depicted, the crime of child pornography has been committed.

On May 1, 2020, the minimum penalty for gross child pornography offence was raised. At the same time, the culpability requirement in the provision was changed so that someone who depicts a child in a pornographic image can be punished for the offence of child pornography, even if he or she did not act with intent but was negligent regarding the circumstance that the person depicted is under 18. The Government intends to appoint an inquiry to review whether the legislative text should clarify that certain child pornography crimes are documented assaults on children by amending the legal classification. (The Government's package of measures to intensify the work to combat men's violence against women.)

(b) See the response to question 32(a).

(c) **Exploitation of a child through the purchase of a sexual act and exploitation of a child for sexual posing**

The double criminality requirement for exploitation of a child through the purchase of a sexual act and the exploitation of a child for sexual posing that has been committed abroad was abolished on July 1, 2013 to increase the opportunities for prosecuting such crimes in Sweden. The punishment for purchasing a sexual act from a child was increased in January 2020 by raising the minimum punishment from fines to a custodial sentence, and the maximum punishment being increased to a custodial sentence of four years. At the same time, the name of the offence was changed to the exploitation of a child through the purchase of a sexual act.

The legislation on trafficking in human beings (thb) has been tightened and developed in several ways since the first provision was introduced in 2002. To ensure stronger protection under criminal law against thb, a clearer description of the crime, better protection for children and raised penalties were introduced in 2018. Essentially, the legislative changes mean that the improper means were clarified, liability for crimes against a person under the age of 18 also applies in the event of negligence in terms of the victim's age, and the minimum punishment for thb (less serious crimes) was raised to six months in prison. The punishment for aggravated procuring was also raised in 2018, as part of an aim to strengthen the criminal law protection against situations similar to thb involving unscrupulous exploitation of those who have casual sexual relations for payment. The maximum punishment for aggravated procuring was raised from eight years in prison to ten years.

(d) Since 2017, the Swedish Police Authority offers all employees interactive training on trafficking in human beings (thb) with children. The Authority carries out specific training for the border police. Persons in charge of investigations and investigators are also offered further training on thb. The Swedish Prosecution Authority holds courses on abuse against children. The aim is to improve participants' knowledge about leading preliminary investigations when children have been exposed to crimes. Specific types of crime are dealt with. There is also training that aims to improve participants' knowledge about evidence preservation in an IT environment and investigating the crime of child pornography.

(e) See the response to question 32(a). The assessment is that the Swedish legislation meets the protocol's requirements.

K. Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

33.

(a) The youth operations carried out by the voluntary defence organisations are not subject to the protocol's questions, since they aim to inform about and generate interest in total defence.

(b) Sweden's assessments of licence applications to export military equipment are based on overall assessments, in line with the Swedish guidelines regulating exports of military equipment, the EU's Common Position on arms exports, and the UN's Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Children's rights are taken into consideration in these overall assessments as part of human rights assessments. As part of the overall assessments, and in line with article 7.4 of the ATT, specific attention is paid to the risk of military equipment being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of violence against children.