

# Government Communication

## 'Power, goals and agency – a feminist policy for a gender-equal future'

On 17 November 2016, the Swedish Government decided on the written communication 'Power, goals and agency – a feminist policy for a gender-equal future' (Govt Comm. 2016/17:10). In the communication, the Government presents the focus of gender equality policy with a new goal structure, a gender equality agency and a ten-year national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women.

The overarching goal of the Government's gender equality policy is equal power for women and men to shape society and their own lives. This policy goal must inform policy making, to advance gender equality in society. The Government is conducting a feminist policy on a broad front with the aim of increasing the pace of change and achieving the gender equality policy goals. A feminist Government aims to make a difference in people's lives. The gender equality policy is also a central part of the work to ensure full respect for Sweden's international human rights commitments.

### A new government agency

The Government intends to establish a gender equality agency in January 2018 to achieve a strategic, cohesive and sustainable governance, and effective implementation of the gender equality policy. The agency will be responsible for follow-up, analysis, coordination, knowledge and support based on the gender equality policy goals. Within the framework of the agency, the Government also intends to make permanent and coordinate several on-going national assignments in the gender equality policy area, such as the assignment on prostitution and human trafficking, and the assignment on supporting central government agencies' work on gender mainstreaming of core activities. These assignments have previously been carried out by different agencies on a year-to-year basis.

By making them the responsibility of the gender equality agency the work can be conducted on a long term and permanent basis. There are also other, permanent, national gender equality assignments currently conducted by other agencies that will be transferred and coordinated within the framework of the new agency: parts of the National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women and parts of the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research, as well as the assignment to distribute government grants to gender equality projects and women's organisations. The intention is to make the work less fragmented, and improve coordination, efficiency and the impact of the Government's gender equality policy.

### National strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women

The Government Communication also announces a ten-year national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women, including honour-related violence and oppression, as well as prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes. The strategy includes objectives and areas of action, a structure for support and follow-up, and an action plan containing measures for the period 2017–2020.

The strategy's objectives are:

- 1) Increased and effective efforts to prevent violence;
- 2) improved detection of violence and stronger protection of and support to women and children subjected to violence;
- 3) more effective law enforcement; and
- 4) improved knowledge and methodological development.

Within the framework of the action plan, the Government supports the development and spread of universal violence prevention efforts, for example in schools and civil society organisations. The Government considers it important that teaching on men's violence against women and domestic violence is included in education programmes where students will encounter perpetrators and victims of violence in their future professions. The Government therefore intends to amend the Higher Education Ordinance's (1993:100) system of qualifications for professional degrees that are deemed most important. The Government also intends to review developments regarding violation of integrity offences, with a focus on gross violation of a woman's integrity, in light of the stricter penalties introduced in 2013. Furthermore, the 2014 legislative amendments on forced marriages and child marriages will be evaluated and an inquiry has been appointed to strengthen the legal status of children in sheltered housing.

For measures within the framework of the Action Plan the Government will allocate SEK 600 million, in addition to more than SEK 300 million in development funds to municipalities and county councils and SEK 425 million to support local women's shelters in 2015–2019. To strengthen the prospects of achieving the gender equality policy goal of ending men's violence against women, the Government will focus particularly on preventive measures and men's participation and responsibility in the realisation of a gender equal society.

The strategy covers national, regional and local efforts to end men's violence against women. The National Board of Health and Welfare, the County administrative boards and the National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women have presented a joint implementation plan for support for know-how and expertise among professionals, and

for distribution of development funds in 2016–2018. During the strategy period, efforts will be supplemented with assignments to other strategic agencies, mainly in the education and judicial sectors, to help ensure more coherent and comprehensive efforts on men's violence against women at local and regional level. The gender equality agency will have an important role in implementing the strategy, among other things by supporting the work of other agencies to implement the strategy, and by providing an overall picture of how the work is proceeding.

### Strengthened governance to achieve the gender equality policy goals

Gender equality policy is wide-ranging and relevant to many policy areas and agencies. Effective governance tailored to relevant agencies is essential in order to achieve the gender equality goals. During this electoral period, the Government will therefore analyse which government agencies' instructions need to be amended with respect to gender mainstreaming. Sex disaggregated statistics, surveys and gender analyses are a basic prerequisite for making gender inequality in society visible and conducting an effective process of change. Access to such statistics needs to improve. The Government is therefore preparing a proposal to introduce a requirement that all agencies that present individual-based statistics in their annual reports should present this data disaggregated by sex.

### Two new sub-goals for the gender equality policy

The overarching gender equality goal remains the same as before: Women and men shall have the same power to shape society and their own lives.

The four subgoals also remain:

- gender equal division of power and influence,
- economic gender equality,
- a gender equal division of unpaid housework and provision of care,
- men's violence against women must stop.

Two new sub-goals are presented in the Government Communication in order to give these areas greater scope in the gender equality policy:

- gender equal education and
- gender equal health.



## Men and gender equality

The gender norms and behaviour patterns that restrict women's life opportunities also have a negative impact on men's life opportunities. For example, gender norms can restrict boys and men with regard to, opportunities in school, men's relationships with their children, health, social vulnerability and risk behaviour, as well as men's use of violence and their exposure to violence. The Government intends to implement measures to strengthen the focus of gender equality work on men and boys with respect to violence prevention, health and to increase men's use of the parental insurance. Men's participation in gender equality efforts as actors of change is a prerequisite if a gender-equal society is to be realised.

## International efforts

Sweden's Government prioritizes promoting gender equality in all its endeavours on the international arena. A gender equality perspective is integrated systematically in Sweden's actions globally, in the EU and bilaterally. Issues concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights are a prerequisite for gender equality and for the full enjoyment of human rights by women and girls. The Government has produced an action plan for feminist foreign policy 2015–2018, aimed at strengthening the rights, representation and access to resources of women and girls. The action plan emphasises women and girls as stakeholders and also the importance of involving men and boys in the process of change for gender equality. Gender equality is both a goal in itself and a prerequisite for achieving other overall objectives, such as peace, security and sustainable development.

## Previous and current initiatives presented

In the written communication, the Government also outlines gender equality policy development over the past 10 years. Experiences and effects of implementation of the gender equality initiative in 2007–2014 are accounted for. In addition, the most important gender equality policy initiatives conducted by the Government during the current electoral period are presented.

Since taking office, the Government has decided numerous measures to advance gender equality, which is presented on [www.government.se/feministgovernment](http://www.government.se/feministgovernment).

Among other things, the Government has decided on new legislation which requires employers to conduct salary surveys annually, to reduce the pay gap between women and men. The Government has also clarified the requirements on employers to promote gender balance in leading positions. In its written communication, the Government announces that an action plan for equal pay will be presented. Furthermore, the Government is taking initiatives in the welfare sector to achieve the gender equality policy goals. One example is the initiative to increase teachers' salaries and the national school development programmes to enhance the work on core values for schools, including work on gender equality, norm criticism and work to counter discrimination and degrading treatment. Another example is the initiative to strengthen quality and staffing in elderly care and the initiative on maternity care and women's health.

