Sweden’s submission to OHCHR’s Report to the 2021 High Level Political Forum on children’s rights[[1]](#footnote-1)

The aim of the Swedish strategy regarding COVID-19 has been to “flatten the curve”, enabling the health care system to take care of those in need of medical services, as well as to protect persons with increased risk of becoming seriously ill of the virus, primarily the elderly (70+) persons. In contrast to most countries, Sweden has not been in “lock-down”.

In Sweden, the primary schools and lower secondary schools (age 6-16), as well as pre-schools (age 1-5), have remained open during the pandemic. The decision to keep schools open was based on a child rights impact assessment and the best interest of the child. The Government has for example expressed that the pre-schools and schools are very important in particular for children in vulnerable situations, since this can be their safe haven as well as offering reliable adult contact outside of their home. Most schools have however adjusted the ways of working due to less staff present in school as well as to decrease the risk of spreading the virus.

Upper secondary schools (age 16-18) were recommended to switch to distance education from 18 March to 15 June 2020. From 6 April 2020 smaller shares of students were allowed back to upper secondary school premises, mostly students that would otherwise not be able to graduate. From 7 December, the country’s upper secondary schools were again recommended to partially close and switch to distance learning until 6 January. It will be possible for students to be present at school for practical parts, national exams and for students who are vulnerable to distance education.

A new ordinance was decided in order to improve schools’ ability to secure the right to education for children and students. The ordinance has, among other things, made it permissible to use distance education when a student or teacher needs to stay at home due to COVID-19.

The Swedish National Board of Institutional Care carried out a child rights impact assessment prior to their decision to restrict visits to institutional care homes and youth prisons. The assessment included children’s own opinions. The assessment concluded that restrictions on visits were not in the best interest of the child, but necessary to decrease the risk of spreading the virus. Following the decision on restrictions, alternatives were offered for children to keep in contact with relatives and friends, primarily by providing the possibility of video calls. The Swedish Prison and Probation Service introduced similar possibilities for children to keep in contact with incarcerated parents, following a decision on restrictions on physical visits.

Further, in light of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on persons belonging to groups already in a vulnerable situation the Government has decided to allocate 100 million SEK to non-profit organisation activities addressing increased vulnerability resulting from the outbreak of COVID-19. The funds are channelled to organisations that work with children at risk and with women, children and LGBTI persons who are victims of violence as well as organisations working to end domestic and gender-based violence and ‘honour’-based violence and oppression.

The Public Health Agency of Sweden has allocated 13 320 000 SEK to organisations working with promotion and prevention in the area of mental health and suicide prevention, including children in migration, due to the current COVID-19 situation.

The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden is a government agency established in 1993 representing children’s rights and interests on the basis of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The agency is an independent national institution based on the Paris Principles that monitors the implementation of the UNCRC in municipalities, regions and government agencies.

The Government has assigned the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden to analyse the different ways in which children are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This analysis is based on the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. Children in vulnerable situations and with special needs should be in focus. Based on the results of the Ombudsman's work, lessons learned must be identified and disseminated to relevant actors. The assignment also includes collecting and reporting on children's and young persons’ experiences and own views of the pandemic.

In addition, the Government has assigned the Ombudsman for Children to provide support to relevant authorities, municipalities and regions in their work to disseminate information and knowledge to children based on the rights of the child in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. See also Additional submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child from the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden focusing on Sweden’s response to Covid-19, 2020-06-15, available on https://www.barnombudsmannen.se/globalassets/dokument-for-nedladdning/ytterligare-information-till-fns-barnrattskommitte-med-anledning-av-corona-pandemin.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)