

## **Introduction**

Extreme poverty is not a definition used in a Swedish context. Due to a well developed social welfare system all persons resident in Sweden are entitled to social security that will promote and protect basic social and economic rights.

Poverty, defined as the share of the households with disposable income under the norm for social subsistence has fallen sharply in Sweden since mid 1990:s. With this measure, the proportion of poor in Sweden has halved since 1996. The reduction in absolute poverty is due to increased real incomes in all income groups, including the poorest.

However, poverty defined as the difference between households with the lowest incomes and households with the highest incomes (relative poverty) has not declined during the same period.

The measures to fight poverty are obviously closely linked to the national social and economic security system and access to employment. However measures to fight social exclusion and discrimination must also be considered a cornerstone in achieving an adequate standard of living for all. Under the Swedish National Persona Data Act (1998:2004) there are limited opportunities to process personal information that reveals a person's race, ethnic origin, religion/other belief or sexual orientation. Therefore there is limited access to data on income, living conditions, etc, connected to individual groups or individuals. This report will present a more general picture on statistics, challenges and recent initiatives taken to fight social exclusion.

## ***Evaluation of social issues***

Evaluation of social issues are conducted in various ways. When it comes to social conditions, the Government gives the National Board of Health and Welfare the mandate to report on the social conditions every four years. This Social Report provide an update overview of contemporary trends with respect to social problems and associated risk factors in the population as a whole and among various population groups, and analyses the possible causes of these trends. The social report has particularly focus on disadvantaged population groups at risk of incurring social and /or economic problem and should also estimate the extent of these problems. Similar reports are produced for areas such as public health and for specific groups, for example young adults.

The government also evaluates the social situation every second year in connection with the so called Common strategy for social protection and social inclusion, which is conducted under the so-called open method of coordination in EU member states. In this strategy the government point out the direction of policies aimed to reduce social exclusion and also evaluate the result of the designated areas and follow the development of specially selected indicators.

Sweden also does regular surveys of homelessness. The latest survey was conducted in 2005. A new survey is due to be finalised this year.

## ***Unemployment***

Unemployment has increased during the past few years due to the global recession. It has left many people in financial difficulties. This is particularly true of groups in a marginalized situations, such as young adults, newly arrived immigrants and persons with disabilities. In times of recession they have particularly difficulties to enter the labor market.

This affects the number of social assistance recipients and the number of people who need financial assistance to support themselves has also increased over the past two years. Although the number is still far from what it was during the 90:s. In 2008, the number of beneficiaries were only half of what they were in 1996.

The overall objective of government policy is to get more people into work and reduce exclusion and hence the number of people dependent on social assistance. The fight against unemployment is implemented through a policy on a variety of fields to increase the number of jobs, encourage entrepreneurship and provide support to people affected by unemployment. Education and a active labor market policy are the cornerstones of the policy.

Since the international financial crisis struck in autumn 2008, the government has acted to overcome the crisis and mitigate its long-term effects. Within social policy, the Government has made vigorous efforts, including by promoting work experience, practical skills, "lifting" and job coaches. The government has allocated additional resources to the Employment Service in order to offer people who have been unemployed for a long time individual assistance, under the so-called "job and development guarantee".

## ***Education and training***

It is also important that people can renew and deepen their knowledge and skills so that they are prepared when economic growth picks up and demand for labour increases again. The Government has therefore made great efforts in the adult education field, including through public investment in vocational secondary municipal adult education and the establishment of the new polytechnic. In 2010, the investment of 18 300 annual pitches adult education which is a significant increase from last year. The drive also means 4500 additional annual pitches at Polytechnic.

## ***Young people***

In the case of unemployed youth, the government has taken a number of different measures. As recently as 1 January this year several changes designed to further enhance job guarantee for young people came into force. Young people can now take part in vocational rehabilitation and operation of the new "LYFT-policy". The

Government is investing 100 million to help young people to get summer jobs. From July 1 2010, older unemployed people are also qualified to apply for a "new start-job".

### ***Foreign born persons***

Persons born abroad, particularly newly arrived refugees to Sweden and foreign born families that live in the suburbs of large cities, are over-represented among families with the lowest incomes. Even if most foreign born persons are successful in finding employment approximately 10-20 percent of all grown ups born abroad find themselves in life-long unemployment and relative poverty. The cost for this situation is high both for the individual, the family and society. Indicators show that particularly foreign born women, elderly and persons with limited education have difficulties finding employment.

In recent years, the majority of social assistance recipients are foreign born. This depends largely on the fact that it takes time for newcomers, especially those who have fled to Sweden, to establish themselves in the labour market. The reception of refugees increased in 2006-2008, including as a result of a new temporary asylum law.

In the period 2003-2007, 12.1 percent of all foreign born people were reported poor, defined as the share of the households with disposable income under the norm for social subsistence. This is notable improvement from the period 1993-1998 when 17.7 percent of all foreign-born were reported poor

Despite the decrease in reported poverty, foreign-born are still overrepresented among the poor. A foreign born person faces a risk of being poor that is 3-4 times higher than a native born. Among immigrants, it is above all the new arrivals who are poor. The proportion of poor among immigrants that have been living in Sweden for less than five years is 28 percent. Among those who has lived in the country in 11-20 years, the proportion is 12 percent.

### ***Foreign born women***

Women born abroad are gainfully employed to a much lesser extent than women born in Sweden. Statistics show the gap to be as large as 20 per cent. Of Swedish-born women, 81 per cent aged 20-64 are employed, while the corresponding figure for foreign-born women in the same age group is 61 per cent. Employment has been particularly low among new arrivals to Sweden with refugee backgrounds. On average, some 15 per cent of the men have a job after having had a residence permit for one year, 35 per cent after three years and 50 per cent after five years. For women, the corresponding figures are five, 20 and 30 per cent, respectively. These results indicate that today's introduction activities are burdened with major structural challenges.

### ***Increase incitement for social inclusion***

In 2009, the government introduced a reform of newly arrived immigrants' labor establishment (Bill 2009/10: 60) which comes into force December 1, 2010. Newly

arrived refugees, etc. involved in the establishment efforts will receive state reimbursement of establishment in the first years of the country. In addition, the reform means that the state, through the Employment Service, will take over primary responsibility for newly arrived immigrants establishment. A more rapid establishment will be achieved by strengthening incentives to work and participate in the establishment efforts. Effective establishment chain will be created by establishing a clearer division of responsibilities between different actors in order to better take advantage of the newly arrived person's skills. The overall aim of reform is that the newcomers will quickly become financially self-sufficient.

The most important part of the reform, which has a clear gender dimension, is that the new benefit will be paid individually to all new arrivals when they actively participate in introduction activities. The purpose is to fix the lock-in effects that are created by social welfare based on the entire household's joint income. The benefit is provided in order to increase the possibilities for both women and men to take part in introduction activities that will increase the incentives to take part in Swedish courses, introduction and employment support. This will hopefully give women better opportunities to get established on the labour market.

In order to get more information concerning the barriers that immigrant and refugee women face when they try to enter the labour market the government has assigned a study on the effects of the above mentioned reform. The results will be presented to the government on the 30 June 2010.

The Swedish Public Employment Service has been assigned to establish methods to increase the employment rate among immigrant and refugee women. The Swedish Public Employment Service has been instructed by the Government to launch pilot projects in the municipalities of Stockholm, Sundsvall, Göteborg, Halmstad, Landskrona and Malmö.

The basic aim is to find ways of adapting the activities of the employment service in order to reach foreign-born women who have no contact with it. The idea is for the employment service to enlist the aid of other actors in this endeavour, including NGOs and local housing companies. Such an approach would meet another important requirement in the pilot project, namely to seek out and develop methods for establishing effective local models for collaboration between different actors, with a view to improving the chances of these women finding employment. The anticipated results include:

- A 10 per cent increase in registered job seekers in the target group
- Professional categorisation of the skills of 60–70 per cent of those registered in the target group
- Division of roles among local actors.

### ***Homelessness***

The Swedish Government has a homelessness strategy for the period 2005-2009. Part of the strategy has been a focus on local development through incentives. Over the past three years awareness of homelessness has increased, and more municipalities are now working with eviction prevention. A research review of housing solutions and a

study of the secondary housing market was published in January 2010. Results of the study show including that stable and permanent housing, supplemented by individual needs support, so-called Housing First, is the best way to combat homelessness. Of the Board's progress report in 2010 shows that seven out of ten municipalities now have a "secondary housing market", ie the alternative contract by the municipality associated with supervision or special conditions.

One of the objectives of the Government's homelessness strategy has been that no child shall be evicted. In 2008, 718 children were still affected by the evictions, and in 2009 the number was 618 children. Although the number of evictions has fallen, too many children are still affected by evictions. There are remarkably wide variations between municipalities regarding the number of children who are affected by eviction. In May 2010, the Government decided to establish a working group attached to the Ministry of Social Affairs to analyze the reasons why children are still affected by evictions and why in some municipalities more children are affected than others. The working group will also analyze the effects of the social service work.

### ***Persons with disabilities***

In 2009, Sweden ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. By this the government confirmed the existing national policy that defines the rights of persons with disabilities as a cross-cutting issue, based on equality, inclusion and diversity. To fight inaccessibility and discrimination will be the two main strategies to achieve equal living conditions in the future implementation.

The definition of disability in Sweden is not based on diagnoses but on the perception of a functional impairment in relation to the surrounding environment. It is therefore difficult to reveal the socio – economic situation of the group. Recent statistical reports are however showing that persons that are entitled to services and support due to their disability are facing major challenges in relation to income and access to employment. Statistics show that less than 20 percent of the group has any connection to labour market and that the median yearly income is far below the national average.

In the national unemployment statistics that would have a much broader definition of disability, 20 percent of the jobseekers in labour market programmes reported some kind of disability. Among the openly unemployed, only 8 % were disabled. A variety of new measures have been launched by the Government to assist people with disabilities to get back into the labour market.

The main, and overarching, goal to combat poverty among persons with disabilities is therefore to increase opportunities for employment and to identify and remove obstacles to their participation in working life. Those unable to take part in the regular labour market must be offered meaningful employment with great freedom of choice. It is particularly important that young people with disabilities have the chance to enter the labour market at an early stage. This means, among other things, that active labour market measures are especially targeted at jobseekers with disabilities. Targeting the long-term unemployed is especially important in order to increase labour market

participation among disabled people. People with disabilities are overrepresented among the long term unemployed.

So called “New start jobs” were launched in January 2007. The New start jobs gives an employer who hires a person who has been long-term unemployed a chance avoid having to pay employer's social security contributions for the employee during a period corresponding to the persons previous unemployment period. It will now be even easier for long-term unemployed people to enter the labour market. The Government has doubled the deduction to employers who recruit a person for a new start job. The New start jobs have worked well for people with disabilities. In about 23 per cent of the cases, those employed, have been persons with disabilities.

The largest programmes are the Job and development programme, and the youth job programme. Job development guarantee will play an important part in getting people with disabilities back into the labour market. The Public Employment Service offer activities and various measures such as work experience or job coaching within the framework of the job guarantee for young people. This could be employment with special employment support. The goal of the youth job programme is to offer special measures at an early stage to people who are aged under 25. This could be intensified charting, studies, career guidance and job seeking activities with coaching. Work experience and training can also be included. There are entry jobs with employment support for newly arrived immigrants, which is outside the guarantees. There is also work experience and support for starting your own business.

Beside general measures for the long term unemployed, the government assigns about 14 billion SEK (about € 1.5 bn) every year for measures specially aimed for people with disabilities. About 90 000 people with disabilities have subsidized jobs financed by these means.

The wage subsidy and Samhall (a state-owned company providing work for people with disabilities) are the most important forms of subsidized jobs for people with disabilities. These jobs are real and meaningful with conditions in accordance with collective agreements. About 40 percent of the people recruited to Samhall come from prioritized groups like those with multiple disabilities, intellectually challenged and people with psychological disabilities. Even though the target group is difficult to integrate into the labour market, each year Samhall manages with rehabilitation and training to get 5 per cent of employees with disabilities to transit to regular employment outside of Samhall.

The Government has also launched a new 1 billion SEK - initiative for people with disabilities which consists of three steps; a programme for assessment and guidance, an Employment Development Programme and, finally, a non-Samhall Sheltered Employment. This new model will be regularly monitored and evaluated.

### ***Discrimination against minorities***

Under the Persona Data Act (1998:2004) it is prohibited to process personal information that reveals a person's race, ethnic origin, religion/other belief or sexual orientation.

However, quarterly, half-yearly and annual statistics on the population of Sweden are compiled by the national statistics agency, Statistics Sweden. Population statistics are presented in three sub-groups. The first includes population broken down by e.g. sex, age, citizenship and country of birth. The second describes population changes, e.g. migrations, births and deaths. And finally, future population trends are forecasted.

Independent research and the experience of the Equality Ombudsman (as of the 1 January 2009 the four previous ombudsmen against discrimination merged into one, the Equality ombudsman) both indicate that Roma are particularly adversely affected by prejudice. Qualitative studies have been conducted identifying problems such as early drop-out from school as well as uneven school attendance, lack of labour market relevant skills and qualifications, unemployment, poverty – i.e. many have income support, indebtedness, discrimination, poor health.

During 2008 the former Ombudsman against ethnic discrimination estimated to have received about 50 complaints from Roma. Compared to 2007 this was an increased number of complaints. The complaints mainly concern the areas of goods and services, housing and social services. This has also been a continued trend in the complaints that the Equality Ombudsman received during 2009.

The National Council for Crime Prevention compiles statistics on hate crime. Since 2008 these crime statistics are broken down to for instance also reveal anti-roma, islamophobic and anti-african motivated crimes.

### ***National minorities***

Sweden's national minorities are the Jews, the Roma, the Sámi, the Swedish Finns and the Tornedalers.

In June 2009 a new strategy for the National Minorities was adopted. The strategy contains a number of changes to strengthen the rights of national minorities and to raise the level of ambitions for the implementation of the minority rights policy. The government's minority strategy thus contains actions to: secure improved implementation of the Council of Europe minority conventions ; improve national follow-up of the minority policy; counteract discrimination and marginalization of national minorities; empower the national minorities and strengthen their influence; promote the preservation of national minority languages.

The County Administrative Board of Stockholm and the Same Parliament have been given the assignment to follow-up the new national minority strategy.

A number of authorities have also been given the assignment to during a three year period follow-up, analyze and report back to the Government their activities in relation to the goals of the new national minority policy/strategy.

Between 2008 and 2010 the Government has a special project focusing on gender equality among the national minorities. A number of assignments have been given to different authorities or similar institutions. E.g. the Swedish National Institute of Public Health has been given an assignment to 2008–2010 conduct a study on how women victims of violence from the national minorities are treated and supported by public sector and to initiate activities to improve the treatment. The University of Uppsala received an assignment 2008 to map adult education for women from the national minorities. The Swedish National Council of Adult Education received an assignment 2010 to give support to education on entrepreneurship among women from the national minorities.

Furthermore a special focus has been given to the situation for Roma. As a result a Delegation for Roma Issues was appointed in 2007. The delegation is a Government Committee with a temporary mandate. Among other things it has had the task to promote and support municipal projects and services intended to improve the situation of the Roma. Another task has been to present proposals for how to improve the living conditions of the Roma in society which include areas such as access to education, training, employment and occupation. Initially the Delegation's mandate was only until 31 December 2009. However, the mandate regarding presenting proposals has been prolonged and the Delegation is now going to deliver its final report to the Government by June 2010. The Government is then going to consider the proposals.

The County Administrative Board of Stockholm has been given a temporary task from 1 January 2010 to provide support to the municipal projects initiated by the Delegation and to guide contacts between Roma and different authorities.

The Equality Ombudsman is presently working on a report on how a national equality body can work with the law as a tool to redress Roma women and men and to counter discriminating structures. The report is based on the work carried out by the former Ombudsman against ethnic discrimination which had a special project towards the Roma including, among other things, human rights education. The County Administrative Board of Stockholm gives support to organisations that represent the national minorities.

The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs has received a Government assignment to give support for gender equality work among national minorities 2008–2010 to organisations that represent the national minorities.

Apart from this the Government sets aside adequate finances, every year, for support to NGO's engaged in combating discrimination and other forms of intolerance. The Government subsidies are regulated in different ordinances. The National Board for Youth Affairs (a government agency) administers applications for these government



subsidies. These ordinances aim especially at activities against racism, homophobia and similar forms of intolerance (such as hatred or prejudice against groups such as Muslims, people of African origin, Roma or LGBT-persons) and for local activities against discrimination, commonly referred to as anti-discrimination offices. Non-profit organisations and foundations that carry out work within these fields can apply for these subsidies.

### ***Violence against women***

Domestic violence and inequality between women and men is a fundamental obstacle to achieve social inclusion. To combat violence against women is a key to fight social exclusion. The Swedish government adopted its first national action plan to combat prostitution and trafficking in human beings for sexual purposes in July 2008. The plan covers the period 2008-2010. The Action Plan encompasses five priority areas and includes 36 measures to fight prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes. The five priority areas are:

- Protection and support for people at risk;
- More emphasis on preventative work;
- Higher standards and improved efficiency in the justice system;
- Increased national and international cooperation;
- A higher level of knowledge and awareness.

Over 215 million SEK has been spent on the implementation of the measures in the action plan. The action plan focuses specifically on the protection and support needs of individuals at risk, and states that a victim sensitive approach must guide all activities. A number of governmental agencies, NGO's and other organisations are commissioned to carry out activities deriving from the measures of the Action Plan. The Action Plan requires that special measures are taken on behalf of children and young people. Moreover, the Action Plan aims to intensify outreach activities targeting those exposed to prostitution or trafficking for sexual purposes, and give greater priority to sheltered housing, treatment centres and other forms of support and protection. Evaluation and training of professionals are key elements of the plan.

A comprehensive evaluation of the Action Plan will be undertaken by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention in 2011 and will be presented to the Parliament.