

Additional information on Sweden's 23rd National Report on the Implementation of the European Social Charter

(Articles 3, 4, 5, 6 & 20 on Labour Rights)
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Swedish Institute for Human Rights

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Introduction

The Swedish Institute for Human Rights (SIHR) is Sweden's national human rights institution. Its mandate is established by law in the Act on the Institute for Human Rights (2021:642), and the SIHR operates in accordance with the Paris Principles relating to national human rights institutions. Since October 2024, the SIHR has been accredited with A-status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI).

In December 2025, the Government of Sweden submitted its 23rd National Report to the European Committee of Social Rights ("the Committee") on the implementation of the Revised European Social Charter. The Swedish Institute for Human Rights is pleased to submit its first report to the Committee with additional information to support its examination of Sweden's 23rd National Report.

The SIHR notes that Sweden has not accepted the provision of Article 2.1 on reasonable daily and weekly working hours, despite having responded to the questions relating to that provision. The SIHR encourages the Government to review the possibility of accepting additional provisions of the Charter, in particular those that the Committee has assessed as not giving rise to any obstacles.¹ Moreover, SIHR recommends the Government to grant national NGOs the right to submit complaints within the collective complaints system.

The SIHR also notes that the Social Charter is relatively unknown in Sweden and recommends that the Government works to increase awareness of the Charter, its monitoring mechanisms as well as the Committee's conclusions and recommendations.

In preparation for this report, the SIHR has spoken with a number of actors (see annex 1). We are grateful for the input we have received but, unless otherwise stated, the content and conclusions presented here are our own.

¹ Council of Europe, European Social Charter, April 2024, Fact Sheet Sweden, p. 1. —[Sweden](#)— (Accessed 2026-06-16).

Article 3 – The right to safe and healthy working conditions

Article 3.1 Health and safety and the working environment

Please provide information on the content and implementation of national policies on psychosocial or new and emerging risks, including:

- in the gig or platform economy;
- as regards telework;
- in jobs requiring intense attention or high performance;
- in jobs related to stress or traumatic situations at work;
- in jobs affected by climate change risks.

As noted in the state report, the Government’s Work Environment Strategy 2021–2025, A Good Work Environment for the Future, has expired. In June 2025, the Inquiry on a Good Work Environment for a Changing Working Life submitted its proposals for a new work environment strategy covering the period 2026–2030. The inquiry was also tasked with analysing the impact of the previous Work Environment Strategy.²

The inquiry concludes that the impact of the previous Work Environment Strategy has been mixed. Overall, however, it found that the strategy has had limited influence on the Government’s and public authorities’ collective efforts, as it has only partially been translated into reforms and budgetary measures, and has not been subject to systematic follow-up by the Government.³

² SOU 2025:73, En arbetsmiljöstrategi för ett förändrat arbetsliv: Betänkande av Utredningen om en god arbetsmiljö för ett förändrat arbetsliv. [En arbetsmiljöstrategi för ett förändrat arbetsliv, SOU 2025:73](#) (Accessed 2026-06-09)

³ SOU 2025:73, En arbetsmiljöstrategi för ett förändrat arbetsliv: Betänkande av Utredningen om en god arbetsmiljö för ett förändrat arbetsliv. [En arbetsmiljöstrategi för ett förändrat arbetsliv, SOU 2025:73](#) (Accessed 2026-06-09), p. 12–13.

As of 28 May 2026, the Government's Work Environment Strategy for 2026–2031, *A Good Work Environment in a Changing Working Life*, is in force.⁴ The Inquiry proposed the establishment of a national coordination function within the Government Offices to support the implementation of the new strategy through coordination, guidance, and monitoring. This received support from a majority of consultation bodies. However, despite the mentioned evaluation, the Government instead charged the Swedish Work Environment Authority, along with other relevant actors, with undertaking the coordination. Moreover, progress of its implementation is merely conducted through an annual oral update to the Government Offices with a written interim report due in 2030 and a final report in 2032.

The gig or platform economy

The previous Work Environment Strategy noted that platform work is changing the way work is organised and performed, giving rise to new risks that highlight the need to further develop existing regulatory frameworks. It also emphasised the importance of clarifying who bears responsibility for, and exercises control over, the work environment.

Despite this, the Work Environment Strategy for 2026–2031 does not explicitly address gig work or platform work. However, the strategy notes that work-related crime may involve workers being denied the working and employment conditions to which they are entitled, being subjected to unreasonable working hours, or receiving unfairly low wages. It further states that employers who knowingly and systematically violate occupational health and safety regulations create unfair competition, with consequences that affect entire sectors of the labour market.⁵

It remains unclear under what circumstances the Government considers gig and platform work to constitute work-related crime since there is no adequate regulation or policy in place, nor under development, that comprehensively

⁴ Government Communication 2025/26:266, *En god arbetsmiljö i ett föränderligt arbetsliv – regeringens arbetsmiljöstrategi för 2026–2031*. [En god arbetsmiljö i ett föränderligt arbetsliv – regeringens arbetsmiljöstrategi för 2026–2031](#) (Accessed 2026-06-09)

⁵ Government Communication 2025/26:266, *En god arbetsmiljö i ett föränderligt arbetsliv – regeringens arbetsmiljöstrategi för 2026–2031*. [En god arbetsmiljö i ett föränderligt arbetsliv – regeringens arbetsmiljöstrategi för 2026–2031](#) (Accessed 2026-06-09), p. 20.

addresses the loopholes used in Sweden by platform companies to evade responsibility for the working environment.

The implementation of the EU's Platform Work Directive primarily regulates a legal presumption that platform workers should be considered employees rather than self-employed, in order to improve working conditions in platform work. In consultation responses to a government inquiry examining the EU's Platform Work Directive, consultation bodies have pointed out that a legal presumption that gig workers are employees is not sufficient in the Swedish context, since, in contrast to other European countries, gig workers are generally already regarded as employees in Sweden. Instead, they argue that greater focus is needed on the status and responsibilities of platform companies as employers.⁶

A government inquiry⁷ proposed in 2022 that a contracting entity exercising primary control over the work environment should also bear occupational health and safety responsibility for platform workers and *egenanställda* (self-employed contractors). However, the proposal has not resulted in legislation, meaning that many platform workers and *egenanställda* remain outside the protection of the Work Environment Act.⁸

In Sweden, platform companies often outsource the formal responsibility for the production of services, including the employer responsibility, to intermediaries. Platform workers are employees, and the intermediary is therefore formally their employer, even though it is the platform's algorithm that directs and allocates the work.⁹

The intermediary can for example set up a framework agreement (*ramavtal*) covering intermittent employment (on-demand employment/*behovsanställning*) for various assignments, following instructions from the intermediary or from the platform company. According to framework agreements the employee is

⁶ See Svenska Transportarbetareförbundet, Yttrande över Genomförande av plattformsdirektivet (SOU 2026:3); Taxiunionen, Remissvar diarienummer A2026/00012, Genomförande av Plattformsdirektivet (SOU 2026:3); and TCO, SOU 2026:3 Genomförande av plattformsdirektivet A2026/00012.

⁷ SOU 2022:45, Steg framåt, med arbetsmiljön i fokus, Betänkande av Utredningen om utökade möjligheter att upprätthålla en god arbetsmiljö, Stockholm 2022.

⁸ Annamaria Westregård, Digitala daglönare i gig-ekonomin: En rättsvetenskaplig studie av arbetstagarbegreppet, IFAU Rapport 2025:1, Uppsala 2025, p. 42.

⁹ Swedish Labour Court, AD 2022 no. 45.

employed for one work shift at a time and each employment relationship ends upon the expiry of the agreed shift. Under the framework agreement the employee also agrees to use their own work gear.¹⁰ There are indications that short-term employment contracts and insecure forms of employment have a negative impact on the working environment.¹¹ Moreover, the workers are not employed in between “gigs”¹² and thus much of the time no employer is responsible for their occupational health and safety.

These very short-term temporary employments are consistent with what is permitted under the Swedish Employment Protection Act. In this respect, Swedish labour law is relatively unique within the EU in terms of its allowing for such flexible contractual arrangements.¹³

See more information on digital platform work under Article 3.3.

Telework

The new Work Environment Strategy sets out a vision that “remote work is used in ways that contribute to health, well-being, and productivity in working life.” The strategy highlights several important aspects, noting for example that remote work can have both positive and negative effects on gender equality. The fact that women more often perform unpaid care work in the home may entail a risk that women more frequently alternate between tasks while working remotely, which can result in longer working hours and reduced recovery time. It also notes that the increased prevalence of remote work contributes to further differentiation of work conditions, widening the gap between those who are able to benefit from its advantages and those who are not.

Another important perspective in relation to remote work, which is not addressed in the strategy, is the disability rights perspective. A report chiefly

¹⁰ Swedish Labour Court, AD 2022 no. 45.

¹¹ Swedish Work Environment Authority, Åtterrapporering – regeringsuppdrag om tillsynsinsats med inriktning på nya sätt att organisera arbete, 16 Februari 2022, p. 5.

¹² Svenska Transportarbetareförbundet, Arbetsgivarmålvakterna och det svenska plattformsarbetet, <https://www.transport.se/media/ji3jhnt/arbetsgivarmalvakterna-och-det-svenska-plattformsarbetet.pdf> (Accessed 2026-06-17) p. 4 and 11.

¹³ Annamaria Westregård, Digitala daglönare i gig-ekonomin: En rättsvetenskaplig studie av arbetstagarbegreppet, IFAU Rapport 2025:1, Uppsala 2025, p. 40.

authored by Stockholm University shows that increased opportunities to work from home after the pandemic have enabled more people with disabilities to enter the labour market or retain their jobs. The report recommends that hybrid work be used as a tool to enhance accessibility, and that the Swedish Work Environment Authority and the Equality Ombudsman provide guidance that enables remote work for persons with disabilities, for example as a reasonable accommodation measure in accordance with the Discrimination Act.¹⁴

The disability rights organisations the Disability Rights Federation (*Funktionsrätt Sverige*) and DHR share this view, while also emphasising that it is not a solution that suits everyone and that it must not replace accessibility measures in the workplace.¹⁵

Jobs requiring intense attention or high performance

No additional information.

Jobs related to stress or traumatic situations at work

The previous Work Environment Strategy highlighted that welfare sector occupations are overrepresented in sickness absence due to negative stress-related health impacts. The health and social care sector stand out in terms of ill health resulting from organisational and social factors in the working environment, such as an imbalance between job demands and resources, high workload, and limited opportunities to influence how work is performed.

The strategy stated that the trend towards increasing stress in working life needs to be reversed, and that the Government would therefore prioritise issues related to the organisational and social work environment in the coming years. It also noted that occupational health and safety regulations need to be reviewed from a gender equality perspective, as most employed

¹⁴ Dan-Olof Rooth, Nicholas Bloom och Gordon B. Dahl, SNS Analys 115, December 2025, Distansarbete och sysselsättning bland personer med funktionsnedsättning. <https://cms-production.sns.se/app/uploads/2025/12/SNS-Analys-115.-Distansarbete-och-sysselsattning-bland-personer-med-funktionsnedsattning.pdf> (Accessed 2026-06-09)

¹⁵ Hej Olika, Trendbrott: Distansarbete ger jättelyft för personer med funktionsnedsättning, 8 December 2025. <https://hejoliika.se/artikel/trendbrott-distansarbete-ger-jattelyft-for-personer-med-funktionsnedsattning/> (Accessed 2026.06.09)

women in Sweden work in the public sector, where care for people is central.¹⁶

However, these problems persist. In a consultation response to the inquiry's proposal for the new Work Environment Strategy, *Facken i välfärden* – a collaboration between trade unions in the welfare sector – stated that high workload, understaffing, ethical stress, and lack of recovery continue to characterise everyday work life for employees within the welfare sector. They also highlighted that threats, violence, harassment, and undue influence constitute a growing occupational health and safety problem within the welfare sector.¹⁷

In May 2026, the Swedish Parliament approved ILO Convention 190 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work and ILO Convention 191 on a safe and healthy working environment. Although the government inquiry in preparation for the ratification of ILO Convention 190 assessed that Sweden already meets the requirements of the Convention, the inquiry considers that a clarification should be introduced into the Work Environment Act stating that the working environment, as far as possible, shall be free from violence and harassment.

According to the inquiry, this would clarify what already applies within the framework of systematic work environment management and the employer's obligation to take action, as well as make it clearer that violence and harassment from third parties are covered, and that protection applies in relation to all categories of persons covered by the Work Environment Act.¹⁸

¹⁶ Swedish Government, Work environment strategy 2021–2025 – “A good work environment for the future”, p. 20 and 22.

¹⁷ *Facken i välfärden*, Gemensamt remissyttrande till betänkandet SOU 2025:73 En arbetsmiljöstrategi för ett förändrat arbetsliv.

¹⁸ Middelman, A. (2021) “Sverige kan ratificera ILO:s konvention om avskaffande av våld och trakasserier i arbetslivet”, *Altinget*, 12 June. Available at: <https://www.altinget.se/artikel/sverige-kan-ratificera-ilos-konvention-om-avskaffande-av-vaald-och-trakasserier-i-arbetslivet> (Accessed: 2026-06-09).

The Swedish Institute for Human Rights supported the inquiry's proposal to clarify the provisions concerning violence and harassment in the Work Environment Act (1977:1160).¹⁹

Furthermore, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Organisations (Saco) are of the opinion that the right to a work life free from violence and harassment should be enshrined in the Work Environment Act.²⁰

Jobs affected by climate change risks

A clear example in Sweden of an occupation where the working environment is already being affected by climate change is reindeer herding.²¹ As reindeer herding is a traditional livelihood and an integral part of the Sámi way of life, these changes have implications not only for occupational health and safety but also for the effective enjoyment of Indigenous rights.

Risks associated with climate change were not mentioned in the previous Work Environment Strategy, but the new strategy states that climate change affects working life and the work environment through higher temperatures, increased rainfall, storms, and extreme weather events, both in Sweden and globally. It highlights the need to improve knowledge of how climate change impacts the working environment, and how sectors, occupations, and workplaces can adapt to existing and future changes.²²

The National Knowledge Centre for Climate Change Adaptation at the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI) confirms that there is a lack of knowledge regarding how a changing climate affects the Swedish work environment and what measures are appropriate under

¹⁹ The Swedish Institute for Human Rights, Remissvar – Betänkandet av utredningen om ILO:s konvention om våld och trakasserier i arbetslivet (SOU 2021:86).

²⁰ Syrjänen Stålberg, M., Fristedt, K. och Waern, C. (2026) "Regeringen måste göra mer för att stoppa hot och våld i arbetslivet", *Altinget*, 28 april. Available at: <https://www.altinget.se/artikel/regeringen-maaste-gora-mer-for-att-stoppa-hot-och-vaald-i-arbetslivet> (Accessed: 2026-06-09).

²¹ Umeå University, Nytt forskningsprojekt ska stärka arbetsmiljön inom renskötseln, news article, 19 June 2025, available at: [Umeå University](https://www.umu.se/nyheter/nytt-forskningsprojekt-ska-starka-arbetsmiljon-inom-renskotseln) (accessed 2026-06-09).

²² Swedish Government, Work environment strategy 2026–2031 – En god arbetsmiljö i ett föränderligt arbetsliv (skr. 2025/26:266), p. 20.

Swedish conditions. It has stated that workplaces need to begin conducting risk assessments and plan for increased heat stress in the working environment.

The National Expert Council for Climate Adaptation highlighted in its first report to the Government in 2022 that there is a need for the Swedish Work Environment Authority to update its regulations, as they do not take climate change into account. The Council also recommended that the Swedish Work Environment Authority develop a climate and vulnerability analysis and an action plan in order to work more systematically with climate adaptation than what currently is the case.²³

Article 3.2 of the Revised Charter, Health and safety regulations

a. Please provide information on:

- **the measures taken to ensure that employers put in place arrangements to limit or discourage work outside normal working hours (including the right to disconnect);**

As noted in the state report, Sweden does not have a regulated right to disconnect outside normal working hours (a “right to disconnect”), such as the ability to ignore work-related messages or calls. There is also no legislation explicitly prohibiting employers from contacting staff outside working hours.

Instead, the Government refers to provisions in the Working Hours Act, the Work Environment Act, and the Parental Leave Act. The state report states that in the Working Hours Act, time is classified either as working time or rest time – there is no intermediate category – and that being on call or otherwise available outside normal working hours is considered working time.

²³ Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (2025) “Arbetsplatser måste klimatanpassa”, *Arbetarskydd*, 28 maj. Available at: <https://www.arbetarskydd.se/arbetsmiljoe/smhi-arbetsplatser-maste-klimatanpassa/4446863> (Accessed: 2026-06-09).

The Government also refers to the regulation of overtime in the Working Hours Act.

Thus, there is no explicit right to disconnect from work, as has been introduced in some other European countries.²⁴

- **how the right not to be penalised or discriminated against for refusing to undertake work outside normal working hours is ensured.**

No additional information.

b. Please provide information on:

- **the measures taken to ensure that self-employed workers, teleworkers and domestic workers are protected by occupational health and safety regulations;**

As stated in the state report, self-employed workers are generally not covered by the Work Environment Act. However, both remote workers and domestic workers are covered.

For more information on the supervision of implementation of health and safety regulations concerning domestic workers see Article 3.3.

- **whether temporary workers, interim workers and workers on fixed-term contracts enjoy the same standard of protection under health and safety regulations as workers on contracts with indefinite duration.**

As indicated in the state report, the Work Environment Act makes no exceptions for temporary employees. However, as noted above, there are indications that short-term employment contracts and insecure forms of

²⁴ In June 2023, nine EU countries had legislation granting workers a right to disconnect from work (Belgium, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain). European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Right to disconnect: Implementation and impact at company level, 29 November 2023.

employment in themselves have a negative impact on the working environment.²⁵

Moreover, the challenges highlighted under Article 3.1 should be noted regarding how platform work is often organised in ways that circumvent occupational health and safety responsibilities.

Another particular challenge for occupational health and safety responsibility arises in activities involving multiple layers of subcontracting, for example in the construction sector.²⁶

Article 3.3 of the Revised Charter, Enforcement of health and safety regulations

Please provide information on measures taken to ensure the supervision of implementation of health and safety regulations concerning vulnerable categories of workers such as:

- **domestic workers;**
- **digital platform workers;**
- **teleworkers;**
- **posted workers;**
- **workers employed through subcontracting;**
- **the self-employed;**
- **workers exposed to environmental-related risks such as climate change and pollution.**

Domestic workers

A knowledge synthesis on work environment conditions in domestic services from 2017, commissioned by the Swedish Work Environment Authority, indicates that many workers lack knowledge of their rights or do not dare to

²⁵ Swedish Work Environment Authority, Åtterrapporering – regeringsuppdrag om tillsynsinsats med inriktning på nya sätt att organisera arbete, 16 February 2022, p. 5.

²⁶ SOU 2025:73, En arbetsmiljöstrategi för ett förändrat arbetsliv, p. 177.

assert them, and that employers lack awareness of their obligations to ensure a good working environment.²⁷

A relatively large share of those working in domestic services in Sweden are citizens of other countries and have a weak attachment to the Swedish labour market. This has implications for workers' ability to obtain knowledge of, and assert, their rights, as well as for trade union engagement and activities. Taken together, this contributes to significant gaps in knowledge about working conditions in domestic work and makes occupational health and safety work difficult. The conclusion is that there is a need for both increased labour inspections and further research and mapping of the area.²⁸

Despite this, the Government states in its report that the Swedish Work Environment Authority has not carried out any planned inspection initiatives or campaigns specifically targeting domestic workers. In fact, its mandate is limited when it comes to conducting inspections in private households.²⁹

A recent media investigation of the au pair system, which is also subject to supervision by the Swedish Migration Agency, indicates that the system – originally established to promote cultural exchange – is being used as a source of cheap labour.³⁰

In sum, there are shortcomings in the enforcement of compliance with occupational health and safety regulations for domestic workers.

Digital platform workers

As noted under Article 3.1, digital platforms circumvent the occupational health and safety regulatory framework through new organisational forms. A

²⁷ Calleman, C. (2017) Arbetsmiljö i hushållstjänster och personlig assistans – en kunskapssammanställning. Swedish Work Environment Authority, p. 45.

²⁸ Calleman, C. (2017) Arbetsmiljö i hushållstjänster och personlig assistans – en kunskapssammanställning. Swedish Work Environment Authority, p. 45–46.

²⁹ Under Section 15 of the Swedish Work Environment Ordinance (SFS 1977:1166), labour inspections in private homes may only be conducted at the request of the employer or employee concerned, or where there is another special reason for an inspection.

³⁰ Wikén, J., Atiyeh, J. and Sima, L. (2026) "Så utnyttjas au pairer av svenska barnfamiljer", SVT Nyheter, 28 April. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/sa-utnyttjas-au-pairer-av-svenska-barnfamiljer>. (Accessed 2026-06-09).

government inquiry concluded already in 2017, in relation to platform work, that clear rules on the form in which work is performed and how occupational health and safety responsibilities are allocated between potential employers are essential not only for those with formal responsibility for the working environment, but also for enforcement and supervision.

Uncertainties in this area may make it difficult for the Swedish Work Environment Authority, as the supervisory authority, to identify the appropriate addressee to whom any requirements should be directed. Occupational health and safety matters may require prompt action, and situations in which responsibility for an individual's work environment is unclear or takes a long time to establish are therefore problematic.³¹ The Swedish Work Environment Authority has, in various contexts, highlighted that there are challenges in its supervisory activities and in the application of the regulatory framework.³²

As stated in the State report, the Government assigned the Swedish Work Environment Authority to carry out a pilot project between 2019 and 2022 to inspecting *egenanställningsföretag* (self-employment company) and digital platforms.

In its follow-up report, the Swedish Work Environment Authority concluded that it lacks the legal authority to issue decisions on occupational health and safety measures against digital platforms that are not formally considered employers under the Work Environment Act.³³

As noted above, the workforce in platform work in Sweden consists almost exclusively of employees to intermediaries.³⁴ A common arrangement is that the intermediary is a so-called *egenanställningsföretag* (self-employment company), which employs the worker only after the worker has completed an

³¹ SOU 2017:24, Ett arbetsliv i förändring – hur påverkas ansvaret för arbetsmiljön? p. 223–224.

³² SOU 2017:24, Ett arbetsliv i förändring – hur påverkas ansvaret för arbetsmiljön? p. 220.

³³ Swedish Work Environment Authority, Återrapportering – regeringsuppdrag om tillsynsinsats med inriktning på nya sätt att organisera arbete, 16 Februari 2022, p. 1–2 and 22.

³⁴See Svenska Transportarbetareförbundet, Arbetsgivarmålvakterna och det svenska plattformsarbetet, <https://www.transport.se/media/ji3hjht/arbetsgivarmalvakterna-och-det-svenska-plattformsarbetet.pdf> (Accessed 2026-06-17), p. 4, and Swedish Labour Court, AD 2022 no. 45.

assignment.³⁵ A judgment³⁶ of the Administrative Court of Appeal in Stockholm concluded that since no employer–employee relationship was found to exist, the company could not be held liable as an employer and therefore was not required to pay the administrative sanction fee imposed by the Swedish Work Environment Authority.³⁷

The Swedish Work Environment Authority's experience is that, following the judgment of the Administrative Court of Appeal, several *egenanställningsföretag* (self-employment companies) have increasingly begun to enter into employment contracts only after assignments have been completed.³⁸

The business models of platform companies and *egenanställningsföretag* (self-employment companies) have led to occupational health and safety responsibilities being avoided and the Work Environment Act not being applied, which affect the Swedish Work Environment Authority's ability to carry out effective supervision and enforcement.³⁹

Other organisational forms where clear employment contracts exist between employer and employee were not included in the supervisory initiative. For these activities, employer responsibility is clear and occupational health and safety legislation applies. However, as mentioned, there are indications that short-term employment contracts and insecure forms of employment have a negative impact on the working environment.⁴⁰

The Equality Ombudsman (DO) has also warned of a risk of systemic discrimination in connection with work management on digital labour

³⁵See Svenska Transportarbetareförbundet, Arbetsgivarmålvakterna och det svenska plattformsarbetet, <https://www.transport.se/media/ji3hjhnt/arbetsgivarmalvakterna-och-det-svenska-plattformsarbetet.pdf> (Accessed 2026-06-17), p. 21–22.

³⁶ The judgment of the Administrative Court of Appeal in Stockholm of 30 October 2019, Case No. 5725-18.

³⁷ Swedish Work Environment Authority, Åtterrapporering – regeringsuppdrag om tillsynsinsats med inriktning på nya sätt att organisera arbete, 16 February 2022, p. 1 and 14–15; and Annamaria Westregård, Digitala daglönare i gig-ekonomin: En rättsvetenskaplig studie av arbetstagarbegreppet, IFAU Rapport 2025:1, Uppsala 2025, p. 46–47.

³⁸ Swedish Work Environment Authority, Åtterrapporering – regeringsuppdrag om tillsynsinsats med inriktning på nya sätt att organisera arbete, 16 February 2022, p. 14.

³⁹ Annamaria Westregård, Digitala daglönare i gig-ekonomin: En rättsvetenskaplig studie av arbetstagarbegreppet, IFAU Rapport 2025:1, Uppsala 2025, p. 47.

⁴⁰ Swedish Work Environment Authority, Åtterrapporering – regeringsuppdrag om tillsynsinsats med inriktning på nya sätt att organisera arbete, 16 February 2022, p. 5.

platforms. At the same time, there are no plans to provide the Equality Ombudsman with tools to facilitate its supervision of these companies.⁴¹

Overall, it may be questioned whether sufficient measures have been taken to ensure the supervision of compliance with occupational health and safety regulations for digital platform workers.

Teleworkers

As the Government notes in its response, the employer is responsible for ensuring compliance with occupational health and safety legislation also in the context of remote work. Although it is acknowledged that the employer's ability to have actual knowledge of and sufficient insight into the work environment is limited, no specific supervisory measures by the Swedish Work Environment Authority are mentioned.

Posted workers

As mentioned in the State report, foreign employers are required to notify the Swedish Work Environment Authority of posted workers in Sweden. The Swedish Work Environment Authority coordinates joint inspections involving several authorities in order to combat violations of labour regulations.

In its consultation response to a government inquiry on measures against labour market crime, the Swedish Work Environment Authority emphasized that it shares the inquiry committee's view that administrative sanction fees should be increased in order to more effectively target employers who deliberately fail to comply with notification requirements for the posting of workers register.⁴² A trade union also pointed out that the current level of

⁴¹ Equality Ombudsman (DO) (2026) *DO behöver bättre verktyg för att granska gig-tjänster*. <https://www.do.se/om-do/pressrum/aktuellt/2026/2026-03-24-do-behoover-battre-verktyg-for-att-granska-gig-tjanster> (Accessed: 2026-06-09).

⁴² Swedish Work Environment Authority, *Yttrande över slutbetänkandet Arbetslivskriminalitet, - upplägg, - verktyg och åtgärder, - fortsatt arbete*, SOU 2025:25, A2025/00273, p. 2.

sanction fees creates an incentive for companies to make a business decision to pay the fee rather than comply with the rules.⁴³

Another issue is that foreign companies evade administrative sanction fees when the court's attempts at service of process abroad are unsuccessful.⁴⁴

Workers employed through subcontracting

Joint agency inspections show recurring and systematic problems at large construction sites and infrastructure projects in Sweden. These involve projects where many companies work simultaneously, often from several different countries, and where different industries intersect, resulting in long and complex subcontracting chains.

Long chains of contractors can contribute to unclear responsibilities and reduced transparency, which increases the risk of deficiencies in the working environment and other forms of work-related crime. According to the Swedish Work Environment Authority, it becomes more difficult to maintain control and accountability throughout the entire contracting chain as projects become larger and more complex. To address these problems, measures are needed, such as clearer contractor responsibility and increased information sharing between actors.⁴⁵

The trade union federation LO has suggested to limit the number of subcontracting tiers to no more than two, to help reverse the trend of workplace accidents and fatalities.⁴⁶

⁴³ Svenska Transportarbetareförbundet, Yttrande över SOU 2025:25 – Arbetslivskriminalitet – upplägg, verktyg och åtgärder – fortsatt arbete, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Swedish Work Environment Authority, Yttrande över slutbetänkandet Arbetslivskriminalitet, - upplägg, - verktyg och åtgärder, - fortsatt arbete, SOU 2025:25, A2025/00273, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Swedish Work Environment Authority (2026) *Allvarliga brister i stora byggprojekt – hundratals ingripanden efter myndighetskontroller*. <https://www.av.se/press/allvarliga-brister-i-stora-byggprojekt--hundratals-ingripanden-efter-myndighetskontroller/> (Accessed: 2026-06-09).

⁴⁶ Landsorganisationen i Sverige, LOs yttrande gällande remiss En arbetsmiljöstrategi för ett förändrat arbetsliv (SOU 2025:73).

The Swedish National Audit Office (*Riksrevisionen*) is currently conducting an audit of the authorities' cooperation in combating labour market crime. The results of the audit will be presented in a report in December 2026.⁴⁷

The self employed

As stated above, self-employed workers are generally not covered by the Work Environment Act. For work related to platform work, see the section above on platform work.

Workers exposed to environmental-related risks such as climate change and pollution

As the Government notes in its report, the Swedish Work Environment Authority has not carried out any specific inspection initiatives targeting workers exposed to environmental risks such as climate change and pollution.

⁴⁷ Swedish National Audit Office (Riksrevisionen) (2026) *Myndigheternas samverkan mot arbetslivskriminalitet*. <https://www.riksrevisionen.se/granskningar/pagaende-granskningar/myndigheternas-samverkan-mot-arbetslivskriminalitet.html> (Accessed: 2026-06-09).

Article 4 – The right to fair remuneration

Article 4.3 Right of men and women to equal pay for work of equal value

- a. Please indicate whether the notion of equal work and work of equal value is defined in domestic law or case law.

The provisions of the Discrimination Act

As outlined in the State’s response to the Committee’s questionnaire, chapter 3 of the Discrimination Act (2008:567)⁴⁸ details the requirements of annual pay surveys (*lönekartläggningar*) to be carried out by employers in order to detect, remedy and prevent unjustified differences in pay and other terms and conditions of employment between women and men. This includes surveying and analysing pay provisions and practices regarding pay and other terms and conditions of employment applied by the employer; and pay differences between women and men performing work that is to be regarded as equal or of equal value.

Chapter 3, Section 10 of the Discrimination Act defines *work of equal value* as work that, following an overall assessment of the requirements and nature of the work, may be considered equivalent in value to other work. The assessment of the requirements of the work must consider factors such as knowledge and skills, responsibility, and effort, while the assessment of the nature of the work must give particular consideration to working conditions.

No official classification system for evaluating work of equal value

The Equality Ombudsman can provide guidance to employers when it comes to carrying out assessment of what constitutes work of equal value, but there is no official classification system for equal work or work of equal value in

⁴⁸ Discrimination Act, (2008:567) [Discrimination Act, 2008:567 | DO](#) (Accessed 2026-06-16).

domestic law or case law⁴⁹, something that has been criticized by civil society organisations and the Gender Equality Agency.⁵⁰

Challenges in developing case law

In relation to individual cases of alleged pay discrimination, the majority are addressed through consultations between the social partners, with trade unions holding the legal right to represent their members in discrimination disputes. As a result, such cases are frequently resolved through negotiation, wage adjustments, or local settlements, without any formal legal determination of discrimination. Consequently, a significant proportion of disputes do not reach the courts or the Equality Ombudsman and are not reflected in official statistics.

Civil society organisations have therefore recommended that the monitoring body established under the EU Pay Transparency Directive should be mandated to collect and include data on pay discrimination cases handled by social partners, especially those resolved at central level.⁵¹ Such an approach would enhance the empirical basis for monitoring wage discrimination and improve statistical transparency. It could also contribute to the development of a more comprehensive body of practice on how pay discrimination is identified, assessed, and resolved within the framework of collective bargaining and social partner agreements.

b. Please provide information on the job classification and remuneration systems that reflect the equal pay principle, including in the private sector.

Sweden does not operate a statutory job classification or remuneration system for the purpose of implementing the equal pay principle. Instead, pay-setting is based on collective bargaining and a coordinated wage formation model,

⁴⁹ See below, question 4.3 b.

⁵⁰ See for example, Sveriges Kvinnoorganisationer, 2024-10-04, Sveriges Kvinnoorganisationers yttrande över betänkandet Genomförande av lönetransparensdirektivet (SOU 2024:40). [A2024-00792_Genomforande-av-lonetransparensdirektivet_Sveriges-Kvinnoorganisationer.pdf](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06) and Gender Equality Agency, 2022, Bilaga 3 till Jämställdhetsmyndighetens rapport 2022:2, Diariernr ALLM 2021/32 [Bilaga 3 till J. mst. lldhetsmyndighetens rapport 2022:2](#) (Accessed 2026-06-16).

⁵¹Sveriges Kvinnoorganisationer, 2024-10-04, Sveriges Kvinnoorganisationers yttrande över betänkandet Genomförande av lönetransparensdirektivet (SOU 2024:40). [A2024-00792_Genomforande-av-lonetransparensdirektivet_Sveriges-Kvinnoorganisationer.pdf](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06).

complemented by employer-level obligations under the Discrimination Act to conduct annual pay surveys and assess equal work and work of equal value, as detailed above. The equal pay principle is therefore intended to be implemented through a combination of collective bargaining structures and legally mandated employer-level job evaluation processes.

The Gender Equality Agency has stated that the prerequisites for developing such a classification system do exist.⁵² However, despite the requirements of the EU pay transparency directive on gender neutral job evaluation and classification, the government inquiry did not make any specific recommendations as to the form this should take or which institution should be responsible.⁵³

- c. Please provide information on existing measures to bring about measurable progress in reducing the gender pay gap within a reasonable time. Please provide statistical trends on the gender pay gap.**

Annual pay surveys under the Discrimination Act

The Government refers to the pay surveys required under the Discrimination Act as the main measure to reduce the gender pay gap. However, this system has several weaknesses. A review conducted by the Swedish National Audit Office (*Riksrevisionen*) in 2019, 25 years after the introduction of legislation on pay surveys, concluded that pay surveys had only a limited impact on reducing pay differentials between women and men in the labour market. It further found that the obligation to document such surveys had little or no measurable effect on gender pay differences at employer level.⁵⁴ There are

⁵² Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2024, Jämställdhetsmyndighetens remissvar på betänkandet genomförandet av lönetransparensdirektivet, SOU 2024:40, ALLM 2024/211, p.3 [Jämställdhetsmyndighetens remissvar SOU 2024:40](#) (accessed 2026-06-05). See also: Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, Bilaga 3 till Jämställdhetsmyndighetens rapport 2022:2, ALLM 2021/32, [Bilaga 3 till Jämställdhetsmyndighetens rapport 2022:2](#) (Accessed 2026-06-05),

⁵³ SOU 2024:40, Genomförande av lönetransparensdirektivet: Betänkande av Utredningen om genomförande av lönetransparensdirektivet. [Genomförande av lönetransparensdirektivet, SOU 2024:40](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06).

⁵⁴ Riksrevisionsverket, 2019, Diskrimineringslagens krav på lönekartläggning – ett trubbigt verktyg för att minska löneskillnaderna mellan könen, RIR 2019:16, [Diskrimineringslagens krav på lönekartläggning – ett trubbigt verktyg för att minska löneskillnader mellan könen \(RiR 2019:16\)](#) (accessed 2026-06-05). Decoupling gender equality from gender pay audits in Swedish municipalities, in Economic and Industrial Democracy, Volume 43, Issue 4. Decoupling gender equality from gender pay audits in Swedish municipalities - Minna Salminen-Karlsson, Anna Fogelberg Eriksson, 2022 (Accessed 2026-06-06).

also indications that the exercise is often seen as administrative and bureaucratic, often delegated as an exercise to be carried out by HR, and that the overall goal of increasing gender equality has been lost.⁵⁵

Insufficient oversight

A recurring criticism of the pay surveys is that oversight is insufficient. The Equality Ombudsman is mandated to carry out inspections of employers' measures to eradicate pay discrimination, but resources are limited and the sanction system is rarely used.⁵⁶ This can be compared to the legislation relating to work environment⁵⁷ which has a much more rigid oversight and sanction system than the Discrimination Act and more resources are available to the Swedish Work Environment Authority.⁵⁸ Government inquiries, the Gender Equality Agency and civil society organisations have recommended that the Equality Ombudsman be mandated to issue binding regulations and that the sanction system should be strengthened so as to put greater pressure on employers to combat pay discrimination between women and men.⁵⁹

Limited scope

A further weakness is the focus on the individual employer. The pay surveys are therefore of little use in addressing broader structural causes of gender

55 Salminen-Karlsson, Minna and Anna Fogelberg Eriksson, 2021, Decoupling gender equality from gender pay audits in Swedish municipalities, in *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, Volume 43, Issue 4.

Decoupling gender equality from gender pay audits in Swedish municipalities - Minna Salminen-Karlsson, Anna Fogelberg Eriksson, 2022 (Accessed 2026-06-07); Holgersson, C and A. Wahl, 2026, *Makt och inflytande i arbetslivet – om könsfördelningar, normer och förändringsarbete*, Ett kunskapsunderlag till 2024 års jämställdhetsutredning, makt-och-inflytande---arbetslivet.-charlotte-holgersson-och-anna-wahl-002.pdf (Accessed 2026-06-07).

56 SOU 2020:79, *Effektivare tillsyn över diskrimineringslagen– aktiva åtgärder och det skollagsreglerade området: Delbetänkande av Utredningen om vissa frågor i diskrimineringslagen*. [Effektivare tillsyn över diskrimineringslagen – aktiva åtgärder och det skollagsreglerade området, SOU 2020:79](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06).

57 The Swedish Work Environment Act (1977:1160). Note that this is despite the criticism of the oversight of the Work Environment Act.

58 Lönelotsarna, 2024, *Strukturella löneskillnader: Likvärdiga yrken – ovärdiga lön*, [Likvärdiga+yrken-ovärdig+lön.pdf](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06).

59 See: SOU 2020:79, *Effektivare tillsyn över diskrimineringslagen– aktiva åtgärder och det skollagsreglerade området: Delbetänkande av Utredningen om vissa frågor i diskrimineringslagen*, p. 15f. [Effektivare tillsyn över diskrimineringslagen – aktiva åtgärder och det skollagsreglerade området, SOU 2020:79](#), Frederika Bremer Förbundet, 2025, [Därför blir män rikare än kvinnor p. 36](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06), Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2024, *Jämställdhetsmyndighetens remissvar på betänkandet genomförandet av lönetransparensdirektivet*, SOU 2024:40, ALLM 2024/211; Sveriges Kvinnoorganisationer, 2024-10-04, *Sveriges Kvinnoorganisationers yttrande över betänkandet Genomförande av lönetransparensdirektivet (SOU 2024:40)*, [A2024-00792_Genomforande-av-lonetransparensdirektivet_Sveriges-Kvinnoorganisationer.pdf](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06).

pay inequality, including labour market segregation and the undervaluation of work and skills in female-dominated professions. This is exacerbated by the lack of official tools or methodologies for comparing work of equal value leading to variations in how employers conduct pay assessments, something that can affect consistency and comparability across workplaces.

Market used to justify the wage gap

Despite legal requirements for employers to conduct and follow up pay surveys, “market factors” are repeatedly used to justify persistent wage gaps. Employers often frame higher salaries in male-dominated sectors as a reflection of labour market scarcity rather than gendered valuation of work. However, this explanation is difficult to sustain as it is not used to the same extent for sectors such as care and welfare services which also struggle with recruitment.⁶⁰

Lack of an intersectional perspective

In our meetings in preparation for this report, the fact that the pay analyses do not include an intersectional perspective or take into account multiple forms of discrimination, has also been raised as a weakness. In a system in which wages are negotiated individually, pay outcomes can be compounded by biases based on other discrimination grounds. It has been suggested that mandatory pay analyses could thus include pay discrepancies based on for example ethnicity or disability, enabling the identification and mitigation of unexplained pay gaps due to intersectional discrimination.

The Swedish wage-setting system

Further challenges have been raised in relation to closing the gender pay gap. One relates to the Swedish wage-setting system which is based on coordinated collective bargaining, in which a wage norm (*märket*) is established through negotiations in the export-oriented industrial sector and subsequently serves as a benchmark for collective agreements in other sectors

⁶⁰ Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2023, Analys av den könssegregerade arbetsmarknaden: Förutsättningar för en bredare rekryteringsbas till välfärden, Underlagsrapport 2023:8, p.47 [underlagsrapport-2023-8-analys-könssegregerade-arbetsmarknaden-23-04-27](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06). Salminen-Karlsson, M., & Fogelberg Eriksson, A, 2024. Men are Always Better? How Swedish Municipalities Justify Pay Differences in Gender Pay Audit Reports. NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 32(1), 35–48. p. 43f <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2023.2183255>, Lönelotsarna, 2024, Strukturella löneskillnader: Likvärdiga yrken – ovärdiga lön, p.11 [Likvärdiga+yrken-ovärdig+lön.pdf](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06).

of the labour market. While the model is widely regarded as contributing to economic stability and wage coordination, it has been criticised from a gender-equality perspective because it can limit the scope for increasing wages in female-dominated occupations, particularly in the public sector. Critics argue that the system can impede efforts to address the historical undervaluation of occupations predominantly performed by women and thereby constrain progress towards equal pay for work of equal value.⁶¹

This is compounded by the practice of expressing wage increases primarily as percentage increases rather than fixed monetary amounts. Since women remain overrepresented in lower-paid occupations and sectors, percentage-based wage increases tend to produce larger absolute pay increases for workers who already earn higher wages. As a result, even where women and men receive the same percentage increase, the monetary value of the increase is often greater in male-dominated occupations with higher wage levels.⁶²

The civil society organisation, Lönelotsarna, have analysed the structural wage gap in Sweden and conclude that the gap between female dominated and other occupations of equal value is around 20 percent. They also provide constructive suggestions on how the Swedish wage setting system could be modified to reduce this gap.⁶³

The EU Pay Transparency Directive

The EU Pay Transparency Directive has the potential to strengthen the conceptualisation and application of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. However, the Swedish government has not yet reached an agreement on how to incorporate the Directive into national law despite a

⁶¹ SOU 2015:50, Hela lönen, Hela tiden: Utmaningar för ett jämställt arbetsliv. Slutbetänkande av Delegationen för jämställdhet i arbetslivet, p. 209f [Hela lönen, hela tiden Utmaningar för ett jämställt arbetsliv SOU 2015:50](#), Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2023, Analys av den könssegregerade arbetsmarknaden: Förutsättningar för en bredare rekryteringsbas till välfärden, p. 40f [Underlagsrapport 2023 08 Analys Av Den Könssegregerade Arbetsmarknaden 23 04 27 \(4\).pdf](#) (Accessed 2026-06-16).

⁶² Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, Nya regler för lönetransparens, websida: <https://jamstalldetsmyndigheten.se/jamstalldhet-i-sverige/delmal-2-ekonomisk-jamstalldhet/nya-regler-for-lonetransparens/> (Accessed 2026-06-04).

⁶³ Lönelotsarna, 2026, Strukturella löneskillnader. Stäng lönegapet och säkra välfärden! En trepartslösning för jämställda löner, [Stäng lönegapet och säkra välfärden.pdf](#) (Accessed 2026-06-05). See also in English: Lönelotsarna 2025, The Structural Wage Gap in Sweden: High value – low pay. [Highly+valued+-+low+pay.pdf](#) (Accessed 2026-06-05).

government inquiry having been carried out⁶⁴, circulated for comment, and a legislative proposal sent to the Council on Legislation for consideration.⁶⁵

Several aspects of the Government's proposal to implement the Pay Transparency Directive were criticised by the Swedish Women's Lobby as insufficiently ambitious and, in some respects, falling short of the Directive's requirements. The organisation expressed concern that the proposal would weaken existing transparency measures by increasing the threshold for mandatory documentation of equal pay work from 10 to 25 employees, exempting information on pay differences in work of equal value from public disclosure, and introducing reporting based on hourly pay, which it argued could obscure gender pay gaps rather than illuminate them.

The Swedish Women's Lobby also criticised the proposal for failing to reflect key elements of the Directive intended to strengthen equal pay efforts. In particular, it pointed to the lack of provisions on calculating pay gaps in relation to work of equal value, the omission of enhanced trade union participation in pay equity processes, and the removal of the proposed role of the Equality Ombudsman in monitoring the availability of pay analysis tools.⁶⁶

The legislative proposal has, however, not been presented to parliament. In May 2026, the Government stated that they would file a request with the European Commission to delay entry into force of the directive in Sweden until 2027 citing the excessive administrative burden on employers that implementation would entail. They also said that they would work towards a revision of the directive.⁶⁷ The Commission has stated that they have no intention of revisiting the Directive⁶⁸ but the Minister for Gender Equality

⁶⁴ SOU 2024:40, Genomförande av lönetransparensdirektivet, [Genomförande av lönetransparensdirektivet, SOU 2024:40](#) (accessed 2026-06-04).

⁶⁵ Regeringen, 15 januari 2026, Lagrådsremiss: Genomförande av lönetransparensdirektivet, [Genomförande av lönetransparensdirektivet](#) (Accessed 2026-06-05).

⁶⁶ Swedish Women's Lobby, 29 January 2026, Brev till Statsrådet Nina Larsson: Arbeta om lagförslaget för jämställda löner, [Brev-till-statsradet-Nina-Larsson-om-lagradremsen-for-lonetransparensdirektivet-ver-3.pdf](#) (Accessed 2026-06-04).

⁶⁷ Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet, 2026-03-11, Pressmeddelande: Mer tid för förberedelser inför genomförandet av lönetransparensdirektivet, [Mer tid för förberedelser inför genomförandet av lönetransparensdirektivet - Regeringen.se](#) (Accessed 2026-06-04).

⁶⁸ European Commission – 2026-5-22) Answer given by Ms Lahbib on behalf of the European Commission, P-001317/2026, [P-10-2026-001317-ASW_EN.pdf](#) (accessed 2026-06-04).

has been quoted as saying that they still hope for a renegotiation.⁶⁹ However, an instruction has been issued to the Equality Ombudsman to continue to take preparatory measures for the implementation of the directive. This will include carrying out promotional measures concerning employers' work on pay surveys aimed at increasing knowledge of how pay survey processes are conducted and improving understanding of the support employers need in their preventive efforts against pay discrimination. The assignment is to be completed by November 2027.⁷⁰

Statistical trends

The Swedish gender pay gap has narrowed considerably over the past two decades, but progress has stalled since around 2019.

Recent statistics on the gender pay gap and the gender income gap can be found at the Swedish National Mediation Office. For example: https://www.mi.se/app/uploads/Gender_pay_gap_2024.pdf What does the official statistics say? And at Statistics Sweden, via: [Gender statistics](#). See also: [På tal om kvinnor och män 2026: Statistik om jämställdhet](#), published on the 9 June 2026, especially the section on [wage statistics](#).

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency maintain explanatory statistics in relation to the Government's gender equality sub-goal on economic equality, including figures on gender-based pay and disposable income differentials. See: [Fakta och statistik om ekonomisk jämställdhet | Jämställdhetsmyndigheten](#).

⁶⁹ Publikt, 2026-06-02, EU vill inte skjuta på lönetransparensdirektivet, [EU vill inte skjuta på lönetransparensdirektivet | Publikt](#) (Accessed 2026-06-04).

⁷⁰ Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet, 2026-06-04, A2026/00595, Uppdrag att fortsätta förberedelserna av genomförande av lönetransparensdirektivet genom främjandeinsatser, [Beslutsdokument](#) (Accessed 2026-06-08).

Article 5 – The right to organise

- a. Please indicate what measures have been taken to encourage or strengthen the positive freedom of association of workers, particularly in sectors which traditionally have a low rate of unionisation or in new sectors (e.g., the gig economy).

In the Government's report, it is stated that trade unions are adapting their recruitment efforts to reach potential members who lack a physical workplace or who require information about unions in languages other than Swedish. However, in practice, the downward trend in unionisation among workers is particularly pronounced among foreign-born individuals, and several trade unions report difficulties in organising this group.⁷¹ In 2006, the rate of trade union membership in Sweden was the same among native-born and foreign-born workers: 77 per cent. In 2022, it had fallen to 63 per cent among native-born workers and 51 per cent among foreign-born workers.⁷²

The lower rate of union membership among foreign-born workers is partly linked to their overrepresentation in the most insecure forms of employment (which are common in health and social care), as well as the fact that many have lived in Sweden for a relatively short period of time, with all that this implies in terms of knowledge of trade unions and collective agreements, as well as proficiency in the Swedish language.⁷³

The lowest rates are found among posted workers, seasonal workers, and other individuals who work in Sweden without being registered as residents.⁷⁴

According to the Trade Union Centre for Undocumented Migrants (Fackligt Center för Papperslösa)⁷⁵, irregular migrants and foreign workers who have been exploited are rarely willing to contact Swedish authorities or trade

⁷¹ SOU 2024:14, Myndighetssamverkan, en gemensam tipsfunktion, lärdomar från Belgien och gränsöverskridande arbete, p. 201–202.

⁷² Kjellberg, A. (2023). Kollektivavtalens täckningsgrad och vita fläckar. (Arbetsliv & inflytande). Arena Idé, p. 87.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 89.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 15.

⁷⁵ Fackligt Center för Papperslösa is a non-profit association established by LO and TCO, together with trade unions affiliated with LO, TCO and Saco, with the aim of assisting and supporting workers without legal residence or documentation on the Swedish labour market.

unions due to fear of deportation.⁷⁶ Furthermore, vulnerable labour migrants do not always have sufficient incentives to contact a trade union, as a work permit during the first two years is tied to a specific employer and may be revoked if the conditions for the permit are no longer met – for example, if actual employment conditions are worse than those stipulated in collective agreements or standard practice, regardless of the reason.⁷⁷

The trade union the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) argues that the status of work permit holders needs to be strengthened in several ways so that they can organise and assert their rights without risking deportation.⁷⁸ The trade union the Central Organisation of Swedish Workers (SAC) proposes that the Government should investigate how the ability to claim agreed-upon or outstanding wages can be strengthened for vulnerable groups, which is the most acute issue and which would also make it easier to organise migrant workers.⁷⁹

The Delegation against Labour Market Crime has assessed that public authorities' work on information initiatives aimed at strengthening vulnerable workers' knowledge of their rights and available support mechanisms has not been fully implemented.⁸⁰ Both the Trade Union Centre for Undocumented Migrants and TCO have emphasised that public authorities should provide information to migrant workers as early as possible, for example during the work permit application process, on how the Swedish labour market functions and how to contact trade unions.⁸¹

⁷⁶ TCO:s yttrande över Arbetslivskriminalitet - upplägg - verktyg och åtgärder – fortsatt arbete (SOU 2025:25).

⁷⁷ SOU 2024:14, Myndighetssamverkan, en gemensam tipsfunktion, lärdomar från Belgien och gränsöverskridande arbete, p. 201–202.

⁷⁸ TCO:s yttrande över Arbetslivskriminalitet - upplägg - verktyg och åtgärder – fortsatt arbete (SOU 2025:25).

⁷⁹ SAC, Remissvar till delbetänkandet om arbetslivskriminalitet.

⁸⁰ SOU 2024:14, Myndighetssamverkan, en gemensam tipsfunktion, lärdomar från Belgien och gränsöverskridande arbete, p. 160 and 163.

⁸¹ Fackligt center för papperslösa, Yttrande över Delegationen mot arbetslivskriminalitets slutbetänkande Arbetslivskriminalitet, upplägg, verktyg och åtgärder, fortsatt arbete, SOU 2025:25 and TCO, Yttrande över Arbetslivskriminalitet - upplägg - verktyg och åtgärder – fortsatt arbete (SOU 2025:25).

b. Please describe the legal criteria used to determine the recognition of employers' organisations for the purposes of engaging in social dialogue and collective bargaining.

No additional information.

c. Please describe the legal criteria used to determine the recognition and representativeness of trade unions for the purposes of engaging in social dialogue and collective bargaining.

In an article by associate professors Niklas Selberg and Erik Sjödin, the authors note that “yellow” trade unions (employer-controlled unions) now exist in Sweden. ILO Convention No. 98 and ILO Convention No. 151, as well as ILO Recommendation No. 91, require national law to provide workers with protection against the opposing party establishing such unions. All of these ILO instruments have been ratified by Sweden with a general reference to the fact that Swedish law fulfils their requirements. However, the legislature has not identified any specific statutory provision, case law precedent, or preparatory works statement that explicitly implements protection against yellow trade unions. As a result, yellow trade unions may be able to conclude collective agreements without genuine member support.⁸²

A different but related issue regards trade unions' right to determine their own membership. In 2019, the Swedish Transport Workers' Union (*Svenska Transportarbetareförbundet*) expelled a member who was active in a political party. The union justified the decision on the grounds that the values and activities of the political party in question were incompatible with Transport's mission as set out in its statutes.

The expelled member challenged the decision in court. The Stockholm District Court declared the expulsion invalid, and the Svea Court of Appeal subsequently upheld the judgment. The Swedish Supreme Court later declined to grant leave to appeal.

In October 2023, Transport filed an application with the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that the Swedish state, through the decisions of the national courts, had interfered with the union's right to determine its own

⁸² Selberg N, Sjödin E. Inrangering av gula fackföreningar i svensk kollektiv arbetsrätt. *Svensk Juristtidning*. 2023;(4), p. 335–365.

membership. The union claimed that this constituted a violation of the freedom of association protected by Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In October 2025, the European Court of Human Rights communicated the application to the Swedish Government and put questions to the Government concerning the alleged interference with the applicant union's freedom of association under Article 11 of the Convention.⁸³

d. Please provide information:

- **on the status and prerogatives of minority trade unions.**
- **on the existence of alternative representation structures at enterprise-level, such as elected worker representatives.**

Minority and independent trade unions

Independent trade unions consulted in the preparation of this report expressed concern that they are at a structural disadvantage within the current Swedish industrial relations system. In particular, they point to the interaction between the principle of the primacy of the first collective agreement and the peace obligation (See 6.2 and 6.4 below), which they argue may limit the capacity of unions concluding subsequent agreements to exercise meaningful influence at the workplace. According to these unions, this disadvantage is not necessarily linked to minority status, as even unions representing a majority of workers at a given workplace or sector may be constrained where another union has concluded the first collective agreement with the employer.

A second set of concerns relates to institutional design within the Swedish labour market model. Independent unions note that key structures, such as tripartite consultation mechanisms and the nomination of lay members to the Labour Court, are closely associated with the main employer organisations and trade union confederations. While these arrangements are generally viewed as contributing to stable industrial relations, it is argued that they may in practice limit the ability of unions outside the main confederations to

⁸³ Svenska Transportarbetareförbundet (2025) *Europadomstolen har fattat beslut om att ställa frågor till svenska regeringen*. <https://www.transport.se/publicerat/europadomstolen-har-fattat-beslut-om-att-stalla-fragor-till-svenska-regeringen> (Accessed 2026-06-15). The case before the European Court of Human Rights is registered under application no. 37028/23.

influence the development and operation of the system on equal terms. (See below 6.2).

These issues are reflected in current application filed by the Swedish Dockworkers' Union with the European Court of Human Rights. The Union argues that secondary collective agreements have weaker practical effect in enforcement, as disputes concerning breaches are typically litigated and damages pursued under the framework of the primary agreement. It contends that this can result in situations where its own collective agreement is formally recognised but has limited independent enforcement value, particularly where the incumbent union does not pursue claims on behalf of its members.

Further, they claim that the system reduces the practical value of membership in a minority union, since effective enforcement and sanctions are perceived as being linked primarily to the first agreement structure. It argues that this creates an imbalance between unions in practice and may deter workers from joining or remaining in the secondary union in contravention of the freedom of association.

Finally, they raised concerns about the institutional neutrality of the Labour Court. They submit that lay judges are nominated by organisations involved in the broader collective bargaining system, including those that have participated in developing amendments to the Co-Determination Act affecting the role of secondary collective agreements. It also notes that the Swedish Transport Workers' Union, which is the bargaining counterpart in the dispute, is affiliated with the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), creating an institutional link between LO and one of the parties to the dispute.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ See European Court of Human Rights, *Svenska Hamnarbetarförbundet v. Sweden*, Application No. 25947/23, communicated to the Government of Sweden on 26 March 2024, [SWEDISH DOCKWORKERS' UNION v. SWEDEN](#) (Accessed 2026-06-11). See also Sweden, August 2025, Report for the period 1 July 2022-30 June 2025, made by the Government of Sweden in accordance with Article 22 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organization on the measures taken to give effect to the provisions of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) .

Article 6 – The right to bargain collectively

Article 6.1 Joint consultation

- a. Please state what measures are taken by the Government to promote joint consultation.

Government consultation

Union representatives that SIHR have spoken with in preparation for this report note a disappointment with how the government have negotiated with the unions in recent years. The main avenue for input into legislative and policy development is referral mechanisms whereby inquiries and proposals related to legislative and policy development are sent to a wide range of actors for comment. Unions we spoke to have noted that time given for the referral responses is often insufficient and that unions have at times not been included on the list of referral bodies. This is in line with general criticism of the referral process which has been seen to be taken less seriously by the government than has traditionally been the case.⁸⁵

Consultation between the social partners

As mentioned in the State report, the Swedish system is characterised by strong independence of the social partners. Legislation promotes collective bargaining and overall, employer organisations and trade unions cooperate efficiently to develop and maintain collective agreements. The legal framework is designed to facilitate and promote collective bargaining, and employer organisations and trade unions generally engage in structured consultation and negotiation processes for the conclusion and maintenance of collective agreements.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ See Swedish Institute for Human Rights, 2026, Annual Report 2026: Executive Summary, p.7 [Annual Report 2026](#) (Accessed 2026-06-09).

⁸⁶ Council of Europe, 2025-15-12, European Social Charter: 23rd, National Report on the Implementation of the European Social Charter submitted by The Government of Sweden, Cycle 2026, RAP/rCha/SWE/23(2026), Art 6.1.

Although the system has contributed to a high level of stability in the labour market, there are a number of possible weaknesses in that it relies to a large extent on autonomous bargaining and a general respect for the system on the part of the partners.

While the framework includes certain procedural duties to negotiate in specific situations under the Employment (Co-Determination in the Workplace) Act (1976:580) (MBL) (Hereinafter referred to as “the Co-Determination Act”), there is no obligation to conclude collective agreements. It therefore occurs that employers choose not to enter into collective agreements. A notable example is the ongoing dispute concerning Tesla’s operations in Sweden, where the employer has consistently opposed entering into a collective agreement, despite extensive industrial action and mediation efforts by the Swedish National Mediation Office (*Medlingsinstitutet*). The Mediation Office has stated that, despite these efforts, the parties have been unable to reach an agreement.⁸⁷

While such cases still remain exceptional in the Swedish context, they illustrate the structural reliance of the system on the willingness of both parties to participate in collective bargaining processes. From a systemic perspective, this raises the question of how far the regulatory framework ensures the practical effectiveness of collective bargaining where one party declines to engage and thus how the state, in these cases, ensures fulfilment of its human rights obligations.⁸⁸

b. Please describe what issues of mutual interest have been the subject of joint consultation during the past five years, what agreements have been adopted as a result of such discussions and how these agreements have been implemented.

⁸⁷ Arbetsvärlden, 2025-09-03, IF Metall växlar upp mot Tesla – medlarna lägger ned, [Medlarna ger upp om Tesla – IF Metall växlar upp](#) (Accessed 2026-06-12).

⁸⁸ See for example European Committee of Social Rights, Resolution CM/ResChS(2014)1: Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) v. Sweden, Complaint No. 85/2012. “On the basis of Article 6§2, States Parties undertake not only to recognise, in their legislation, that employers and workers may settle their mutual relations by means of collective agreements, but also actively to promote the conclusion of such agreement if their spontaneous development is not satisfactory and, in particular, to ensure that each side is prepared to bargain collectively with the other”.

No additional information.

- c. Please state if there has been any joint consultation on matters related to (i) the digital transition, or (ii) the green transition.**

No additional information

Article 6.2 Collective bargaining

- a. Please provide information on how collective bargaining is coordinated between and across different bargaining levels including information on:**

- **the operation of factors such as erga omnes clauses and other mechanisms for the extension of collective agreements;**
- **the operation of the favourability principle and the extent to which local/workplace agreements may derogate from legislation or collective agreements agreed at a higher level.**

No additional information.

- b. Please provide information on the obstacles hindering collective bargaining at all levels and in all sectors of the economy (e. g. decentralisation of collective bargaining).**

Whereas the Swedish system works well for the most part and ensures cooperation between employers and employees, a number of issues have been raised during our meetings that could hinder collective bargaining and challenge the Swedish system.

Stable collective agreement coverage but declining unionisation

As mentioned above, Sweden has relatively limited legislative regulation of wages and many other terms and conditions of employment. Instead, these issues are largely regulated through collective bargaining between employers' organisations and trade unions. Maintaining high levels of organisation and effective participation in collective bargaining therefore remain crucial to the model's continued effectiveness and inclusiveness.

Data from the Swedish National Mediation Office distinguish between collective agreement coverage and trade union density, which follow different patterns in the Swedish labour market.

Collective agreement coverage remains high and relatively stable at around 88 per cent of employees. However, coverage is unevenly distributed, with lower rates among small and newly established enterprises compared to larger employers. This reflects the continued centrality of collective agreements in regulating the labour market, while also highlighting gaps in coverage within parts of the small business sector.⁸⁹

Trade union density, by contrast, has declined over recent decades and now stands at approximately two-thirds of the workforce. This is particularly apparent among blue-collar workers, where the proportion of workers who are union members has fallen from almost eight out of ten in the mid-2000s to around six out of ten today. Trade union density is also lower among persons born outside of Sweden and younger persons. The decline in trade union density has been attributed both to increased membership costs following reforms to the unemployment insurance system in 2007 and to broader labour market changes, including the expansion of temporary and other forms of precarious employment.⁹⁰ Although collective agreement coverage has so far remained resilient despite this decline, reduced unionisation has been identified as a potential long-term challenge to the representativeness and institutional foundations of the Swedish model.⁹¹

Primacy of the first concluded collective agreement

Union representatives from independent trade unions that SIHR spoke with raised the problem of the principle of the primacy of the first concluded

⁸⁹ Medlingsinstitutet, 2026, Collective agreement coverage and the labour market organisations 2025, [Collective agreement coverage and the labour market organisations 2025 - Medlingsinstitutet](#) (Hämtad 2026-06-24). See also Kjellberg, A., 2026, Den svenska modellen 2026: Medlemmar, förtroendevalda och organisationsgrad, Arena Idé, [Den svenska modellen 2026 - Arena Idé](#) (Hämtad 2026-06-12).

⁹⁰ See Kjellberg, A., 2011, The Decline in Swedish Union Density since 2007. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, 1(1), pp. 67–93. <https://doi.org/10.19154/njwls.v1i1.2336> and Medlingsinstitutet, 2026, Kollektivavtalsäckning och arbetsmarknadens organisationer 2025, [Collective agreement coverage and the labour market organisations 2025 - Medlingsinstitutet](#) (Accessed 2026-06-24).

⁹¹ Medlingsinstitutet, website updated 2026-06-10, Kollektivavtalsäckning och organisationsgrad, [Kollektivavtalsäckning och organisationsgrad - Medlingsinstitutet](#) (Accessed 2026-06-12). Publikt, 2025-02-12, [Den svenska modellen hotas när facken tappar medlemmar | Publikt](#) (Accessed 2026-06-15).

collective agreement. This principle refers to the practical rule that, where an employer is already bound by a collective agreement, that agreement will normally take precedence over later collective agreements covering the same work or group of employees.

The principle is closely linked to the broader aim of maintaining stability and predictability in collective bargaining relations and avoiding conflicting contractual obligations for employers. However, the amendment of the Co-Determination Act in 2019, aimed at reinforcing the peace obligation and clarifying conflict rules (see below 6.4), reinforced the importance of the first agreement principle as it introduced a limit on industrial action for unions with alternative or competing collective agreements making the first agreement harder to challenge in practice, something that individuals SIHR spoke with criticised as undermining trade union pluralism. Additionally, the relatively new 'yellow' unions, referred to under Art. 5 above, could potentially be used to undermine the influence of mainstream unions through the application of the principle of the primacy of the first agreement.

Composition of the Labour Court

The Swedish Labour Court (*Arbetsdomstolen*) is a specialised court with jurisdiction over labour law disputes, including disputes concerning collective agreements, industrial action, trade union rights, and the interpretation and application of labour legislation. In certain cases, particularly those involving employers' organisations, trade unions, or collective agreements, the Labour Court acts as the court of first and final instance. The Court has a tripartite composition reflecting the Swedish labour market model. In addition to legally qualified judges, its members include lay judges nominated by employers' organisations and trade union confederations, LO, TCO and Saco. This composition is intended to ensure that labour law disputes are adjudicated with both legal expertise and practical knowledge of industrial relations.⁹²

Representatives of independent trade unions, i.e. those not affiliated with the three main confederations, have raised concerns regarding this composition.

⁹² Chapter 3, The Labour Disputes (Judicial Procedure) Act (1974:371), [Lag \(1974:371\) om rättegången i arbetstvister \(LRA\) | Lagen.nu](#), Arbetsdomstolen, website, Organisation, [Organisation - Arbetsdomstolen](#) (Accessed 2026-06-09).

In combination with the principle of the primacy of the first collective agreement, this practice may result in situations where disputes brought by one union are adjudicated by lay judges appointed by competing unions. See Article 5(d) above for a description of the pending application before the European Court of Human Rights, in which these concerns are raised.

Criticism from the employer perspective

On the other hand, employer organisations and representatives of small businesses, while supporting the overall premises of the Swedish model, have at times been critical of the strong leverage available to trade unions in securing collective agreement coverage, arguing that industrial action and the threat of such action can have disproportionate effects on small and medium-sized enterprises. They have proposed that the Co-determination Act should be modernised to better reflect the current structure of the economy. In particular, they have called for the introduction of a proportionality requirement for industrial action, restrictions on sympathy action affecting employers not directly party to a dispute, and simplified information and consultation obligations for smaller employers. According to this view, such reforms would help restore balance and legitimacy within the Swedish model by ensuring that regulatory burdens and the effects of industrial action are proportionate to the size and circumstances of the businesses concerned.⁹³

c. Please provide specific details on:

- **the measures taken or planned in order address those obstacles;**
- **the timelines adopted in relation to those measures;**
- **the outcomes achieved/expected in terms of those measures.**

No additional information

d. Please provide information on the measures taken or planned to guarantee the right to collective bargaining of (i) economically dependent (self-employed) persons showing some similar features to workers and (ii) self-employed workers.

⁹³ See for example: Företagarna, 2026, MBL – en orimlig 50-åring?
<https://www.foretagarna.se/contentassets/302188daef8c402897f8003844372634/foretagarna-2026-mbl.pdf> (Accessed 2026-06-15).

The right of trade unions to bargain under the Employment (Co-Determination in the Workplace) Act is, in principle, limited to employees and employee organisations. Self-employed persons operating independently and holding an F-tax certificate are generally not covered by these bargaining rights, even though some trade unions accept self-employed persons as members. However, bargaining rights may arise where a formally independent contractor is, following an employment law assessment, deemed to be an employee.⁹⁴

Article 6.4 Collective action

a. Please indicate:

- **the sectors in which the right to strike is prohibited;**

No additional information

- **those sectors for which there are restrictions on the right to strike;**

Industrial peace obligation (*fredsplikt*)

Under Swedish labour law, the right to strike is subject to the principle of peace obligation (*fredsplikt*), which is primarily regulated in the Co-Determination Act.⁹⁵ The peace obligation prohibits trade unions and employers bound by a collective agreement from taking industrial action during the agreement period. Disputes concerning working conditions covered by a collective agreement are instead expected to be resolved through collective bargaining procedures, mediation, or legal mechanisms. As a result, the practical exercise of the right to strike is largely confined to periods of collective bargaining when agreements are being negotiated or renewed.

⁹⁴ Kjellberg, A. (2023). Kollektivavtalens täckningsgrad och vita fläckar. (Arbetsliv & inflytande). Arena Idé, p. 108.

⁹⁵ Employment (Co-Determination in the Workplace) Act (1976:580), [Employment \(Co-Determination in the Workplace\) Act \(Lag om medbestämmande i arbetslivet\) - Government.se](#) (accessed 2026-06-16) Esp sections 26, 27, 41-45.

In 2019, Sweden extended the scope of the peace obligation through amendments to the Co-Determination Act.⁹⁶ The reform further restricted the ability of trade unions to undertake industrial action where an employer is already covered by a collective agreement. The revision of the act was based on a proposal from the trades union confederations and employers' organisations and the stated aim was to safeguard the stability of the collective bargaining system.⁹⁷ However, it was criticised during our meetings with independent trade unions as limiting their ability to use industrial action to gain recognition or influence workplace conditions. The reform has therefore raised questions regarding the extent to which all trade unions enjoy an effective right to strike in practice.⁹⁸ This is something that has previously been raised by both the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) in observations concerning Sweden's application of ILO Convention No. 87.

Additionally, in Case No. 85/2012 of the European Committee on Social Rights' Sweden was found to be in violation of article 6.4. in relation to restrictions to Swedish trade unions' right to strike for the establishment of collective agreements for posted workers.⁹⁹

A further threat to the right to collective action may be illustrated by the case of the termination of employment of trade union. He was dismissed following a temporary blockade of military material destined for Israel entering a Swedish port, on accusation of breach of confidentiality and threat to security. The Police authority dismissed the employer's complaint, and the Labour Court has confirmed that the blockade was lawful. In a joint

⁹⁶ Employment (Co-Determination in the Workplace) Act, 1976:580, [Employment \(Co-Determination in the Workplace\) Act \(Lag om medbestämmande i arbetslivet\) - Government.se](#) (2026-06-11). (Section 41d).

⁹⁷ Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet, 2018, Fredsplikt på arbetsplatser där det finns kollektivavtal och vid rättstvister, Ds 2018:40, [regeringen.se/contentassets/3f90b4e0adbc427ca6cf3556bcac4aa5/fredsplikt-pa-arbetsplatser-dar-det-finns-kollektivavtal-och-vid-rattstvister-ds-201840/](#) (p. 3) (Accessed 2026-06-11).

⁹⁸ Government Legislative Proposal 2028/19:105, Utökad fredsplikt på arbetsplatser där det finns kollektivavtal och vid rättstvister, p. 11ff, [Utökad fredsplikt på arbetsplatser där det finns kollektivavtal och vid rättstvister](#) (Accessed 2026-06-11). See also: See also ILO, Observation (CEACR) - adopted 2022, published 111st ILC session (2023) Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Sweden (Ratification: 1949) and Observation (CEACR) - adopted 2025, published 114th ILC session (2026) Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) – Sweden (Ratification: 1949).

⁹⁹ European Committee on Social Rights, Assessment of the follow-up: Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) v. Sweden, Complaint No. 85/2012, <https://hudoc.esc.coe.int/eng/?i=cc-85-2012-Assessment-en> .

communication by UN Special Rapporteurs, they expressed concerns that the dismissal appears to be in retaliation for Mr. Helgesson's human rights activities carried out within his role as trade union leader.¹⁰⁰ Judicial proceedings are pending before the Labour Court regarding the termination of the employment.

- **sectors for which there is a requirement of a minimum service to be maintained**

Please give details about the relevant rules concerning the above and their application in practice, including relevant case law.

No additional information.

- b. Please indicate whether it is possible to prohibit a strike by seeking injunctive or other relief from the courts or other competent body (administrative body or arbitration body). If affirmative, please provide information on the scope and number of decisions in the last 12 months.**

No additional information.

¹⁰⁰ Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Sweden: dismissal of trade union leader and human rights defender Erik Helgeson following union blockade of military material destined for Israel (joint communication), Ref AL SWE 1/2026 of 9 February 2026. See: [Sweden: dismissal of trade union leader and human rights defender Erik Helgeson following union blockade of military material destined for Israel \(joint communication\) - UN SR Human Rights Defenders](#) (Accessed 2026-06-17).

Article 20 – Right to equal opportunities between women and men

- a. **Please provide information on the measures taken to promote greater participation of women in the labour market and to reduce gender segregation (horizontal and vertical). Please provide information/statistical data showing the impact of such measures and the progress achieved in terms of tackling gender segregation and improving women’s participation in a wider range of jobs and occupations.**

Sweden has implemented a broad set of measures to promote women’s labour market participation and reduce gender segregation, including subsidised childcare, generous parental leave schemes, and statutory employer obligations to carry out equality planning and systematic work on recruitment, working conditions, and career development. Active measures, of which the pay surveys are a part, are to be carried out in cooperation with the unions. These policies have contributed to high female labour force participation but have had limited impact on reducing horizontal and vertical segregation.

Sweden’s labour market is still highly segregated according to gender. A large share of employed women work in welfare occupations, such as teaching, nursing and care work, where women typically comprise 80–95 per cent of the workforce. Men are concentrated in sectors including construction, transport, manufacturing and technical occupations, where women generally make up less than 20 per cent of employees.¹⁰¹ Only 20 per cent of women and 17 per cent of all men work in professions in which the number of male and female employees are balanced.¹⁰²

Sweden has sought to reduce gender segregation through a range of education-related measures, including gender mainstreaming in the education sector, efforts to counter gender-stereotypical study and career choices,

¹⁰¹ Fredrika Bremer Förbundet, 2025, *Därför blir män rikare än kvinnor* p.30 (Accessed 2026-06-06),

¹⁰² Gender Equality Agency, website, updated 2026-05-28, Delmål 2: Ekonomisk Jämställdhet, <https://jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se/jamstalldhet-i-sverige/delmal-2-ekonomisk-jamstalldhet/> (Accessed 2026-06-16).

reforms to curricula and guidance services, and strengthened supervision by the Schools Inspectorate. These measures aim to broaden educational choices and challenge gender norms from an early age. However, government agencies continue to report persistent gender differences in educational pathways, indicating that progress in reducing educational segregation has been slow and that significant challenges remain.¹⁰³

The Gender Equality Agency has concluded that these initiatives primarily focus on affecting individual choices. They point to a need to tackle societal and organisational structures that create unequal conditions within education and reinforce gender segregation. Furthermore, subject-specific cultures and norms within educational environments that generate inequality must be challenged in order to enable individuals to make non-traditional educational choices and to complete their studies successfully.¹⁰⁴

In a study assessing how to broaden the recruitment base for welfare professions, the Gender Equality Agency concluded that the marginal decrease in gender segregation in the labour market is primarily the result of women moving to traditionally male-dominated sectors. The agency further found that men's lower willingness to enter female-dominated fields is linked to the perceived lower status and undervaluation of occupations traditionally associated with women.¹⁰⁵

While significant initiatives have been undertaken to attract women to STEM fields, comparable efforts to encourage men to pursue education and careers in female-dominated sectors, particularly in health, education, and care professions, have largely been absent. The Agency argues that reducing gender segregation requires broader education and labour market policies aimed at increasing the attractiveness and status of female-dominated fields.

¹⁰³ See for example: Skolinspektionen, 2026, Skolinspektionens arbete med jämställdhetsintegrering 2020–2025. Regeringsrapport, regeringens diarienummer A2024/01457 [skolinspektionens-arbete-med-jamstalldhetsintegrering-slutrapport.pdf](#); Skolverket, 2026, Jämställdhetsintegrering i statliga myndigheter - Skolverket Redovisning av regeringens utvecklingsprogram, [Ladda ned publikation - Skolverket](#); Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, Jämställdhetsintegrering i högskolor och universitet: Delredovisning 2025. [Rapport 2025:10 Jämställdhetsintegrering i högskolor och universitet, delredovisning 2025](#) (Accessed 2026-06-07).

¹⁰⁴ See Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2022, Val efter eget kön - En kunskapssammanställning om könsskillnader i utbildningsval, p.84. [Val efter eget kön](#) (Accessed 2026-06-07).

¹⁰⁵ Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2023, Analys av den könssegregerade arbetsmarknaden: Förutsättningar för en bredare rekryteringsbas till välfärden, Underlagsrapport 2023:8, p. 117ff [underlagsrapport-2023-8-analys-konssegregerade-arbetsmarknaden-23-04-27](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06);

Suggested measures include promoting more gender-integrated education systems, improving working conditions and career prospects in female-dominated occupations, and challenging gender stereotypes in education and working life.¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, measures aimed at promoting gender equality in the labour market have been criticised for assuming that women constitute a homogeneous group with shared interests and similar life trajectories centred on full-time employment and motherhood. This approach risks overlooking intersectional differences and privileging the experiences of the majority population, while marginalising the realities of other women.¹⁰⁷ In recent policy developments, migrant women have been explicitly targeted through measures intended to increase labour market participation. While SIHR is broadly positive towards these efforts to strengthen labour market inclusion, we have highlighted the limited consideration given to structural barriers such as discrimination, the devaluation of foreign qualifications, and unequal distribution of care responsibilities, as well as the insufficient integration of a disability rights perspective.¹⁰⁸

The Gender Equality Agency is mandated to follow up progress in relation to all of Sweden's seven gender equality policy objectives¹⁰⁹, including economic gender equality and equal power and influence. In their latest report, they noted that progress towards these goals is uneven with priority being given to violence against women and honour related violence and oppression, whereas less is invested in the goals of economic equality and equal division of unpaid

¹⁰⁶ Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2026, Resultatrapporten 2026: Ojämn styrning ger ojämna resultat, p.40. [rapport-2026-7-resultatrapporten-2026-04-22](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06). See also Gender Equality Agency, website updated 2026-06-03, Uneven governance risks leading to uneven results, [Uneven governance risks leading to uneven results | Swedish Gender Equality Agency](#) (Accessed 2026-06-12).

¹⁰⁷ Mustosmäki, Armi et. al., 2021, Gendered Labor Market (dis)advantages in Nordic Welfare States. Introduction to the Theme of the Special Issue, *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, Vol 11, S7, DOI:10.18291/njwls.132537 p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ Swedish Institute for Human Rights, 2023, Referral response: Etablering för fler – jämställda möjligheter till integration: SOU 2023:24 <https://mrinstitutet.se/vara--publikationer/remissvar/remissvar-2022-2023/2023-11-14-etablering-for-fler--jamstallda-mojligheter-till-integration> (Accessed 2026-06-22). See also Sveriges Kvinnoorganisationer, 2025, Sweden's compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), p. 12f, https://sverigeskvinnoorganisationer.se/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Submission-for-the-Committee-on-the-Elimination-of-Racial-Discriminations-116th-Session_Swedish-Womens-Lobby.pdf (Accessed 2026-06-22).

¹⁰⁹ See: The Gender Equality Agency, website, Gender Equality Policy in Sweden, [Gender equality in Sweden | Swedish Gender Equality Agency](#) (Accessed 2026-06-05).

care work. They note that a number of recent reforms aimed at promoting participation in the labour market, such as a tax rebate for those in work, reforms to the unemployment insurance and to the social security system¹¹⁰, risk having adverse effects on women. They also make the general observation that a significant increase in spending on military defence has redirected resources from other policy areas, including gender equality.¹¹¹

The Gender Equality Agency points to the need for the Government to revitalise gender mainstreaming as a policy instrument, particularly in the state budget process. They note that explicit reference to the gender equality goals in government instructions to authorities have decreased. They also highlight the need for more systematic gender impact assessments in both legislative and policy decision-making. They have also pointed out that while a substantial amount of data, studies, and statistics on gender equality challenges are produced by public authorities, this knowledge is not sufficiently translated into concrete policy action, something echoed by civil society organisations. A stronger focus is therefore needed on turning existing evidence into effective measures that can improve women's position in the labour market.¹¹²

b. Please provide information on:

- **measures designed to promote an effective parity in the representation of women and men in decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors;**
- **the implementation of those measures;**
- **progress achieved in terms of ensuring effective parity in the representation of women and men in decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors.**

¹¹⁰The SIHR has suggests that these reforms may entail retrogression of obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. See SIHR, 2026, Årsrapport 2025, p 180 ff [Årsrapport 2026](#), (Accessed 2026-06-22). SIHR, 2025, Referral response, Kvalificering till socialförsäkring och ekonomiskt bistånd för vissa grupper, SOU 2025:53, [Kvalificering till socialförsäkring och ekonomiskt bistånd för vissa grupper - Institutet för mänskliga rättigheter](#) (Accessed 2026-06-22).

¹¹¹ Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2026, Resultatrapporten 2026: Ojämnr styrning ger ojämna resultat, [rapport-2026-7-resultatrapporten-2026-04-22](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06).

¹¹² Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2026, Resultatrapporten 2026: Ojämnr styrning ger ojämna resultat, [rapport-2026-7-resultatrapporten-2026-04-22](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06), Fredrika Bremer Förbundet, website, Sluta redovisa ojämställdhet – börja avskaffa den, [Sluta redovisa ojämställdheten - börja avskaffa den - Fredrika Bremer-förbundet](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06).

Sweden promotes gender-balanced representation in decision-making positions through a combination of state governance measures and voluntary private-sector initiatives. In the public sector, the state ownership policy requires balanced representation of women and men on the boards of state-owned enterprises, and government agencies are expected to contribute to the national gender equality goal of equal power and influence.¹¹³ In the private sector, gender balance is primarily encouraged through the Swedish Corporate Governance Code¹¹⁴ and transparency measures rather than binding quotas.

Implementation has been most successful where the state exercises direct influence. Gender balance has largely been achieved on the boards of state-owned companies and within government agencies. By contrast, progress in the private sector has been slower. In listed companies, women held 38 per cent of board seats in 2023, while only 11 per cent of board chair positions and 13 per cent of CEO positions were held by women.¹¹⁵

Despite improvements in overall representation, Swedish statistics indicate that parity in decision-making power has not yet been achieved. Women remain underrepresented in senior leadership positions relative to their share of the workforce, including in female-dominated sectors such as healthcare, education and welfare services. Women are more frequently represented in lower-level management positions, while men continue to dominate the most influential leadership roles.¹¹⁶ Similar patterns are found in politics, academia and business, where women are often concentrated in areas related to welfare and social issues, while men are more likely to occupy positions associated with finance, infrastructure, technology and executive leadership. Although

¹¹³ Ministry of Finance, 2025, State Ownership Policy, [State Ownership Policy 2025 - Government.se](#) (accessed 2026-06-07).

¹¹⁴ Swedish Corporate Governance Board, 2024, The Swedish Corporate Governance Code, [SweCorpGovernanceCode_applicable_from_1_January_2024.pdf](#) (Accessed: 2026-06-07).

¹¹⁵ SCB, 2026-06-09, På tal om kvinnor och män 2026: Statistik om jämställdhet, [På tal om kvinnor och män](#), see esp. chapter om power and influence. (Accessed 2026-06-16). Also Holgersson, C and A. Wahl, 2026, Makt och inflytande i arbetslivet – om könsfördelningar, normer och förändringsarbete, Ett kunskapsunderlag till 2024 års jämställdhetsutredning, [makt-och-inflytande---arbetslivet---charlotte-holgersson-och-anna-wahl-002.pdf](#) (Accessed 2026-06-07).

¹¹⁶ Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2025, Jämställdheten i Sverige: Lägesbild över de jämställdhetspolitiska målen, april 2025, p.14. [rapport-2025-15-jamstalldheten-i-sverige-samtliga-lagesbilder-2025-04-17](#) (Accessed 2026-06-07), SCB, 2025-05-03, Fortsatt ojämn könsfördelning bland ledande chefer, <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/artiklar/2025/fortsatt-----ojamn-konsfordelning-bland-ledande-chefer/> (Accessed 2026-06-07).

numerical representation has improved, particularly in areas subject to active state governance, significant vertical segregation persists and women remain underrepresented in positions exercising the highest levels of decision-making power.¹¹⁷

c. Please provide statistical data on the proportion of women on management boards of the largest publicly listed companies, and on management positions in public institutions.

Statistical data on the positions of women on management boards can be found at Statistics Sweden. See for example: [På tal om kvinnor och män 2026](#), published on the 9 June 2026, in particular the section on [power and influence](#).¹¹⁸

The Gender Equality Agency also follows up statistics on the gender equality policy objective: equal power and influence: [Fakta och statistik om makt och inflytande | Jämställdhetsmyndigheten](#)

¹¹⁷ Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2026, Resultatrapporten 2026: Ojämn styrning ger ojämna resultat, p 21f. [rapport-2026-7-resultatrapporten-2026-04-22](#) (Accessed 2026-06-06). Boschini, Anna, 2026, Ekonomisk Jämställdhet, Forskningsunderlag till 2024 års jämställdhetsutredning, [ekonomisk-jamstalldhet-anna-boschini-002.pdf](#) (Accessed 2026-06-08).

¹¹⁸ See also SCB, 2025-05-03, Fortsatt ojämn könsfördelning bland ledande chefer, <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/artiklar/2025/fortsatt-----ojamn-konsfordelning-bland-ledande-chefer/> (Accessed 2026-06-07).

Annex 1

In preparation for this report, meetings were held with representatives of the following organisations:

The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO)

The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO)

The Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (Saco)

The Union for Professionals (Akademikerförbundet SSR)

The Central Organisation of Swedish Workers (SAC Syndikalisterna)

The Swedish Dockworkers' Union (Svenska Hamnarbetarförbundet)

The Swedish Transport Workers' Union (Svenska
Transportarbetarförbundet)

Trade Union Centre for Undocumented Migrants (Fackligt center för
papperslösa)

The Swedish Disability Rights Federation (Funktionsrätt Sverige)

The Swedish Women's Lobby (Sveriges Kvinnoorganisationer)

Malmö Against Discrimination (Malmö mot diskriminering)

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten)

The Equality Ombudsman (DO, Diskrimineringsombudsmannen)

The Swedish National Mediation Office (Medlingsinstitutet)