

Action programme to combat racism against Sami



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Racism has no place in our society. Racism can lead to discrimination, inequality and segregation, and to putting people at risk of social exclusion. In recent years, there have been numerous initiatives to prevent and combat racism, for example within the framework of the National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime, adopted in 2016. The plan is the Government's tool for preventing and combating racism and polarisation in society. The plan addresses racism in general as well as different types of racism; that is, Afrophobia, antisemitism, antigypsyism, Islamophobia and racism against Sami.

In the autumn of 2021, work was initiated on specific action programmes to combat different forms of racism as one of several commitments by Sweden, in connection with Remember – ReAct, the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating antisemitism.

The action programmes aim to complement the National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime, and include both measures aimed at bringing to light and combating each form of racism, and measures aimed at combating racism at large. The action programmes are based on four of the strategic areas set out in the plan: More knowledge, education and research, Strengthening preventive measures online, A more active legal system and Civil society: greater support and more in-depth dialogue. The work will be monitored within the present structures of the plan in accordance with the fifth strategic area of the plan, Improved coordination and monitoring.

The action programmes have been developed based on dialogues with representatives of civil society, reports on the prevalence of racism and hate crimes in Sweden and recommendations from regional and international human rights bodies. They also raise the level of ambition in the effort to combat different forms of racism, in line with the EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020–2025.

The action programme to combat racism against Sami contains measures for the period 2022–2024. A comprehensive presentation of the Government's work in the area cannot be accommodated within the action programme. However, together with the National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime, it forms a common basis for the Government's continuing efforts to combat racism against Sami.

The terms “racism” and “racism against Sami”

In the action programme, the Government proceeds based on the definitions set out in the National plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime. By “racism”, the Government means views that people – due to assumptions concerning race, national, cultural or ethnic origin, religion, skin colour or other similar circumstance – are essentially different from each other and that they therefore can or should be treated in different ways. The plan also uses the term “structural racism” in the sense that racist actions are not

always based on an individual's political convictions but can occur unconsciously. This means that racism, in various forms, exists as part of the structures of society. The term "racism against Sami" is used in the sense of ideologies, beliefs or values that express hostility towards Sami.

Strategic area More knowledge, education and research – needs and actions

Sami have a special status as a recognised indigenous people in Sweden and as one of Sweden's five national minorities. Since 2011, the Instrument of Government specifically mentions the Sami in references to the fact that possibilities for minorities to maintain and develop their own culture and community life shall be promoted.

Racism against the Sami has a long history and has been, and still is today, manifested in many ways. The report "Minoritetspolitikens utveckling år 2020" (*Development of minority policy in 2020*) (2021:9) produced by the Stockholm County Administrative Board and the Sami Parliament, shows that Sami are subjected to hatred and intimidation both physically and digitally, and that hate crimes and harassment against Sami can be expressed through cruelty to and shooting reindeer. Death threats also occur. Sabotage, taunts and insults are other examples of how racism against Sami can be expressed. The picture has been confirmed in dialogues with representatives of Sami organisations, and it has also been pointed out that those who express their Sami identity evidently, reindeer-herding Sami and those with Sami names are most vulnerable.

An important initiative to combat racism against Sami is to raise the level of knowledge in society about the Sami people, their living conditions, culture and rights as the indigenous people. The remit of the Sami Parliament to inform of the conditions of Sami, seek to promote a living Sami culture and propose measures to promote Sami culture is fundamental to improving knowledge in society about the indigenous Sami people.

The Living History Forum has a central role to play in raising awareness of racism against Sami in society. The agency is conducting a major educational initiative on various forms of racism in history and today. An important part of this work is to provide training aimed at school staff and other public sector employees with a focus on quality-assuring how the public sector treats the general public through anti-racism efforts.

In 2021, the Government appointed a Truth Commission to survey and examine the policies conducted in relation to the Sami in a historical perspective and their consequences for the Sami people. The final report will be presented in December 2025 at the latest.

Preventing and combating racism against Sami

- The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society will implement measures to help prevent and combat racism against Sami. The measures will improve the ability of municipalities and regions to prevent and combat racism against Sami through improved knowledge about the Sami people, their living conditions, culture and history and rights as indigenous people. Focus will be on combating racism and prejudice among the younger generation.

Produce, develop and disseminate knowledge-enhancing support to combat racism in the healthcare system

- The National Board of Health and Welfare will produce, develop and disseminate knowledge-enhancing support to combat the occurrence of racism and promote equal rights and opportunities for everyone in the healthcare system and contribute towards equal care. The knowledge-enhancing support will be disseminated among professionals in the healthcare sector to provide support in their treatment of patients and relatives. The knowledge-enhancing support will be tailored to target groups and designed so that it can be assimilated and engrained into the everyday work of healthcare professionals.

Develop and disseminate methodology support in efforts to combat racism

- In 2022–2024, the Living History Forum will develop and disseminate methodology materials on efforts to combat racism to quality-assure how the public sector treats the general public. The agency will also offer opportunities to exchange knowledge and experience for these target groups to provide long-term and effective support in the effort to combat racism and similar forms of hostility in the public sector.

Work-related stress among certain vulnerable groups

- The Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise will collect and compile insights concerning the relationship between the vulnerability of certain groups and work-related stress. A particular focus area will be work environment-related knowledge and the potential implications of vulnerability – due to ethnicity, skin colour and religion or other belief – for the individual’s health. The compilation of insights will be disseminated so that it can serve to support employers, safety representatives and other elected representatives in workplaces.

Discrimination on multiple grounds

- The Equality Ombudsman will, based on reports of discrimination, deepen knowledge concerning discrimination on multiple grounds and illuminate issues relating to intersectionality; that is, how different power structures and grounds for discrimination affect and sometimes aggravate each other.

Continued funding for a national research programme on racism

- The Swedish Research Council, in consultation with the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte), will continue to earmark funding for a national research programme on racism, consisting of SEK 20 million annually.

The subjection of Sami children and youths to racism

The report by the Ombudsman for Children “Om barns och ungas utsatthet för rasism” (*Report on the subjection of children and youths to racism*) (2021) shows that many children find that racist expressions have been normalised and that racism forms part of their daily lives, especially at school and online. The report also shows that racism is manifested in many ways. For example, children are rendered invisible, or have to endure harassment, intimidation and violence in different environments, from other children and adults alike. Studies on the subjection of different minorities show that almost half of young Sami have

experienced that they have been ill-treated or harassed because they are Sami.

Under Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children must have their rights respected and there must be no discrimination against any child. The report describes how some children experience that they do not have access to the same rights as other children, while others are not aware of their rights. In one dialogue with organisations representing children and youths, it was highlighted that children and youths often do not know where to turn to have their rights respected.

According to the Living History Forum's report "Minoritet i historien" (*Minority through history*) (2021), Swedes in general, especially those in lower age groups, lack knowledge about the history of the national minorities. This picture has been confirmed by representatives of Sami organisations who call for aspects such as teaching materials on the indigenous Sami people.

Through schools, children and youths are educated in fundamental democratic values and human rights. A revision of the curriculum, which will start to apply in the autumn of 2022, illuminates the concept of racism and sets out that racism must be prevented and countered with knowledge and active initiatives. It is important that tools are available to improve knowledge on racism against Sami and other forms of racism throughout schooling and that the initiatives carried out optimally meet the needs of teachers and pupils. Central to these efforts are both the Living History Forum and the work of the National Agency for Education.

Higher training materials on racism against Sami designed for teachers

- The Living History Forum will, during 2022–2024, produce supporting materials on racism against Sami designed for teachers and conduct further training initiatives as part of intensified work on awareness-raising efforts on different forms of racism.

Initiatives to bolster democracy to combat racism in schools

- In 2022 and 2023, the National Agency for Education, together with the Living History Forum, will develop a tool for systematic work on initiatives to bolster democracy in the school system and beyond, to combat different forms of racism, including racism against Sami.

Greater knowledge of racism and rights among children

- The Ombudsman for Children will implement awareness-raising initiatives on racism based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to bolster the ability of children and youths to exercise their own rights. The remit includes enhancing the Mina Rättigheter (My Rights) website.

Support and information materials on talking to children about racism

- The Family Law and Parental Support Authority will review, collect and compile knowledge into support and information materials on how adults can talk to children and youths about racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime. The compilation of insights will be disseminated so that it can be used in practice and can serve as support primarily for guardians, but also for the staff of government agencies, municipalities and regions.

Greater knowledge on where pupils and guardians can turn to when someone has been discriminated against or subjected to victimisation

- The Equality Ombudsman will, in cooperation with the Child and School Student Representative (BEO) at the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, implement specific information initiatives on where children, school students and guardians can turn to when someone has been discriminated against or subjected to victimisation at school.

Strategic area Strengthening preventive measures online – needs and actions

The report “Minoritetspolitikens utveckling år 2020” (*Development of minority policy in 2020*) (2021:9) shows that Sami are subjected to hatred and intimidation online and that, on social media, people are incited to attack both reindeer and Sami. The occurrence of racist attacks and offensive comments on social media has also been highlighted in dialogues with civil society.

According to the report by the Ombudsman for Children, “Om barns och ungas utsatthet för rasism” (*Report on the subjection of children and youths to racism*) (2021), the internet is one of the most common arenas in which children are subjected to or experience racism.

According to the report “Utsatt på internet” (*Online victimisation*) (Swedish Media Council, 2020), research shows that certain groups are at greater risk of falling victim to online bullying than others, such as youths with a different ethnicity than the majority of people where they live.

The Swedish Media Council and civil society organisations have contributed knowledge and educational materials to raise awareness of how online texts, images and symbols can entrench racist ideas. Mapping processes and analyses need to be performed to devise tools and initiatives to prevent racism against Sami and other forms of racism with better precision.

Surveying violent extremism and racism in digital environments

- The Swedish Defence Research Agency will survey the prevalence of different forms of racism in digital environments. The remit includes measuring the prevalence of racism and analysing how it manifests itself in different digital environments connected to Sweden. In particular, the agency will examine the prevalence of racism against Sami and other forms of racism.
- As of 2022, the Swedish Defence Research Agency will conduct a permanent survey and analysis of violent extremism and racism in Swedish digital environments.

Methods to combat racism online

- The Swedish Media Council has been commissioned to compile methods for combating racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime online among children and youths. The task entails to identify methods capable of combating the occurrence of such expressions online, for instance based on the different roles that children and youths may have in online bullying situations. It also includes disseminating methods that have proven to work.

Strategic area A more active legal system – needs and actions

Representatives of Sami organisations have described how racism against Sami is manifested in, for example, acts against reindeer and that there are problems in the fact that such offences are not always categorised as hate crimes. The representatives found that such offences were rendered invisible as potential hate crimes. The organisations have called for awareness-raising efforts in the legal system to make hate crimes visible. It has also been pointed out that such vulnerability ultimately affects confidence in authorities and other public-sector actors.

In 2020, 20 hate crimes against Sami were identified, according to the National Council for Crime Prevention's statistics on police reports with identified hate crime motives. This represented 1 per cent of all identified xenophobic and racist hate crimes. Sami representatives have highlighted that Sami seldom report crimes, which is thought to be because reporting victims feel they are met with suspicion and ignorance, that many feel they lack legal rights and that the proportion of reported cases that lead to convictions is low.

There is a need for initiatives that lay down conditions to develop efforts to combat hate crimes targeting Sami. In recent years, the Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Prosecution Authority have raised the level of ambition with regard to hate crimes and other crimes that threaten democracy. An objective formulated by the Swedish Police Authority in an interim report on its work is that all hate crimes shall be investigated by a special resource with in-depth knowledge in the field, and that it should feel meaningful for citizens to report crimes and contact the police irrespective of the outcome in the individual case (Swedish Police Authority, 2022).

The current ban on discrimination is, for some operations, limited to how employees treat the general public. The inquiry on certain issues in the Discrimination Act has, in its final report "Ett utökat skydd mot diskriminering" (*Extended protection against discrimination*) (SOU 2021:94) proposed aspects such as an extended ban for certain public-sector operations, such as law enforcement agencies.

The inquiry proposes that the provision be amended to also include the exercise of public authority in relation to individuals and decisions. The proposals have been referred for consultation.

Advanced and improved efforts to combat hate crime

- In 2022 and 2023, the Swedish Police Authority will continue to advance and improve efforts to combat hate crimes and other crimes that threaten democracy. The Swedish

Police Authority will for example implement knowledge-boosting initiatives at the agency and present the results of the work conducted to improve investigative capacity and clearing of such crimes. Within the remit, the Swedish Police Authority will cooperate with other agencies and organisations.

In-depth study on hate crimes against Sami

- The National Council for Crime Prevention will perform an in-depth study on hate crimes against Sami. The aim is to improve knowledge of hate crime and racism targeting Sami in order to strengthen the preventive work. In its implementation of the remit, the agency shall retrieve knowledge and experience from the relevant agencies, including the Sami Parliament and relevant civil society organisations.

Strategic area Civil society: greater support and more in-depth dialogue – needs and measures

Since 2008, The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has allocated funds to support activities that combat or prevent racism or similar forms of intolerance.

Representatives of Sami organisations have highlighted the possibilities of civil society to help disseminate knowledge about Sami living conditions and culture. At the same time, it has been expressed that the Government places a great deal of responsibility for combating racism against Sami on Sami civil society, and that the organisations need sufficient resources for this work.

An important part of efforts to combat racism against Sami is to involve in different ways the indigenous Sami people in matters concerning them, such as regular consultations in the framework of minority policy. In the effort to combat racism against Sami and other forms of racism, special dialogues have been arranged with Sami civil society and other organisations combating racism against Sami. According to the lag (2022:66) om konsultation i frågor som rör det samiska folket (The Act on Consultation in Matters of Special Importance to the Sami People), the Government must consult Sami representatives before making any decisions in matters of particular importance to the Sami. The decision on an action programme to combat racism against the Sami is considered to be of particular importance to the Sami people. As a representative of the Sami people, the Sami Parliament has therefore been consulted.

Support for civil society's work to combat different forms of racism

- The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society will allocate more than SEK 14 million in 2022 to operations that combat or prevent racism or similar forms of intolerance.

Dialogue with civil society

- The Government intends to continue the dialogue with organisations representing Sami through ongoing meetings on the topic of racism against Sami and the work within the framework of the action programme.