

A feminist government ensures that decisions promote gender equality



Photo: Kristian Pohl/Regeringskansliet

Sweden's feminist government in May 2016

Sweden has the first feminist government in the world. We are committed to building a society in which girls and boys, women and men have the same power to shape society and their own lives, and live their lives to their full potential.

Gender equality is a human right and is ultimately a question of democracy, representation and social justice. At the same time, gender equality is part of the solution to creating jobs and growth. It contributes to economic development by making use of both women's and men's potential. It is a matter of course in a modern welfare state. Declaring ourselves a feminist government entails obligations. Our policy must lead to change and make a difference in people's lives. We work hard to realise our feminist agenda and will continue to do so through policy choices, priorities, and allocation of resources.

Strategic, cohesive and sustainable governance

The feminist government is especially focusing efforts on long-term and strategic measures, targeting structural gender inequality. To mention a few examples:

- We are setting up a national government agency for gender equality policy.

- We are launching a ten-year strategy to end men's violence against women – including honour-related violence and oppression, as well as prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes.
- We are modernising the parental leave insurance system to encourage gender-equal parenting among women and men.

Gender equality central to all decision-making and resource allocation

Gender equality is created where resources are allocated, where standards are set and where decisions are made. Economic policy will be used to increase economic equality and help increase gender equality in society. Reforms must be implemented using a gender-sensitive approach. This requires improved gender equality impact analysis and systematic use of data and statistics disaggregated by sex. The Government's tool for implementing feminist policy is gender mainstreaming, of which gender-responsive budgeting is an important component.

Gender equality policy goals

The overarching goal of Swedish gender equality policy is for women and men to have the same power to shape society and their own lives. Starting from this objective, the Government is working towards six sub-goals:

- Gender-equal division of power and influence.
- Economic gender equality.
- Gender-equal education.
- Gender-equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care.
- Gender-equal health.
- Men's violence against women must stop.

Men's participation and responsibility a prerequisite

The Government is strengthening the focus of gender equality work on men and boys with respect to violence prevention, health, and increasing men's use of parental insurance. Men and boys must also be invited to and involved in gender equality work. Men's participation and responsibility in gender equality efforts as actors of change is a prerequisite if a gender-equal society is to be realised.

The Swedish model: purchasing sexual services is illegal

On 1 January 1999, Sweden became the first country in the world to introduce legislation criminalising the purchase, and not the selling, of sexual services. Since then, the purchase – or attempted purchase – of a sexual service has constituted a criminal offence in Sweden.

Swedish ambassador to combat trafficking in human beings

An ambassador to combat trafficking in human beings has been appointed, and will provide strong support to the work against trafficking in the international arena. The ambassador will especially highlight the gender equality perspective and criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services as a way to decrease demand for sexual services.

Swedish feminist foreign policy

Gender equality is a fundamental objective of Sweden's feminist foreign policy. Ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls is both an obligation within the framework of our international commitments, and a condition for achieving Sweden's foreign policy goals on peace, security and sustainable development. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are a prerequisite for gender equality and for the full enjoyment of human rights by women and girls.

- The Government has launched an action plan for feminist foreign policy 2015–2018, aimed at strengthening the rights, representation and access to resources of women and girls.
- Sweden has a national action plan for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and works actively to ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into all international operations in conflict and post-conflict countries.

