

An abstract graphic featuring flowing, wavy bands of rainbow colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple) that curve across the top-left and bottom-right corners of the page. The background is a solid light pink color.

Proud and safe

Action plan for equal rights and
opportunities for LGBTIQ persons





Ministry of Employment

Action plan for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons

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Foreword

Sweden should be a country where everyone can live their life in freedom and safety, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Proud and safe – that's how we want everyone in our country to feel.

Sweden has come a long way in the fight for LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities. Yet many LGBTIQ persons are still reluctant to live openly, and many are subjected to discrimination, hate crimes and honour-based oppression. The Swedish Government's vision is clear: All persons should feel safe to be who they are and love who they want, without risking violence, harassment, discrimination or other abuses.

For this vision to become a reality, we need to take action. The LGBTIQ movement has been fighting against oppression and discrimination for a long time. Few gains have been achieved without effort, and right now, forces are gaining ground globally that want to roll back the progress that has been made. Unfortunately, many feel that their exposure to hatred and threats is increasing even here in Sweden, not least among transgender persons. We will never accept this. That we should be making progress is a given.

Sweden, which is often regarded as a leader in the area of human rights, also has an important role to play in the international arena. We must work to not only improve the situation of LGBTIQ persons in our own country, but also support and inspire other countries to follow suit.

While many countries have made progress in assuring LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities, large parts of the world still have laws and cultural norms that severely curtail these rights. The Swedish Government has a very clear position. We stand strong in our support for human rights, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. And we will continue to do so. Through international cooperation, especially within the framework of cooperation within the Nordic region and the EU, we can help break down the barriers that limit persons rights to live freely and safely.

This Action plan strengthens the work to combat threats, hatred, violence and discrimination and to promote the health and freedom of LGBTIQ

persons. The Government's ambition is to provide support to those individuals who need to fight to stand up for themselves through the organisations that work for LGBTIQ persons rights. It is only together that we can create a society with equal rights and opportunities for all.

Paulina Brandberg

Minister for Gender Equality and Working Life

1. Introduction

It is worth repeating: in Sweden, everyone should feel safe to be themselves – without risking violence, harassment or discrimination. Sweden is to be a country where persons have equal opportunities to shape their own lives and the society, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

In recent years, many initiatives have been implemented that have contributed to increasing openness in society and to strengthening the equal rights and opportunities of LGBTIQ persons. Although progress has been made, challenges remain. LGBTIQ persons are still exposed to discrimination, hatred, threats, violence and other abuses, in Sweden and in other countries. Work to enable LGBTIQ persons to live a life where their rights and identity are fully respected must therefore continue, and it needs to be strategic, coordinated and long-term.

This Action plan is an important part of this systematic work for an inclusive and equal society, with equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons. The broader ambition is that the Action plan will contribute to a world where everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, can live freely.

1.1 Background

Work for the equal rights and opportunities of LGBTIQ persons has been pursued since 2014 based on a Strategy for equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. The Strategy was supplemented with an Action plan for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ 2020–2023. The Strategy and the Action plan have laid the foundations for long-term work with different focus areas and the appointed LGBTIQ strategic authorities.

1.2 Aim

This Action plan aims to further strengthen the work for LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities by consolidating, supplementing and joining forces.

1.3 Terminology

In this Action plan, when various terms are used, the Government is referring to the following.

Sexual orientation includes heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual orientation. The terms gender identity and gender expression cover all persons, regardless of how their gender identity or gender expression relates to society's norms.

The acronym LGBTIQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender persons, intersex and queer. Transgender persons is an umbrella term for persons who do not perceive themselves to be cisgender. Cisgender refers to persons who identify with the gender assigned to them at birth and whose gender expression conforms to society's norms for that gender.

Queer is a multifaceted term that, in brief, refers to a norm-critical approach to categorising persons based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Non-binary gender identity means that a person identifies as neither male nor female, both male and female, or no gender at all. It is sometimes also used as an umbrella term for all gender identities that do not match the binary gender categories female and male.

Intersex is a term used for conditions where a person's physical development does not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies. The term encompasses a wide range of physical conditions. An intersex variation can be a difference in external anatomy, but it can also be a hormonal or genetic difference. Thus, it does not have to be something that is visible on the outside of the body, nor does it have to be linked to gender identity.

1.4 Gender equality and other perspectives and factors

Work to promote equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons needs to include several different perspectives. This is important because LGBTIQ as an umbrella term covers a wide range of heterogeneity and different ways of identifying with and relating to societal norms regarding gender and sexuality.

LGBTIQ persons who identify as women or men may have specific circumstances, needs or experiences at group level that affect their living conditions. LGBTIQ persons may also have more individual experiences of discrimination, such as LGBTIQ persons with disabilities or a foreign background.

Sex-disaggregated statistics and various types of analyses based on the groups women and men can be important tools for identifying a lack of gender equality. When carrying out gender equality analyses, it is important to also include LGBTIQ persons so that stereotypical gender norms and patterns are not confirmed and recreated, as they risk representing LGBTIQ persons as abnormal. Statistics Sweden (SCB) has produced support material for including binary and non-binary transgender persons in questionnaires and surveys (SCB 2020), as well as a guide for including additional perspectives besides gender in work with gender equality analyses (SCB 2023). Efforts to change destructive or limiting norms related to sexuality, femininity and masculinity are an important part of work for gender equality as well as a key issue in promoting LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities in society.

1.5 European Union and internationally

Work for LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities in Sweden is reinforced by and reinforces the work that is being done within the European Union (EU) and in various international forums. Efforts within the EU and as part of international cooperation are important in achieving LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities in Sweden, Europe and the rest of the world.

During its 2024 Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Sweden worked to highlight and promote a Nordic voice against the growing resistance against gender equality and LGBTIQ persons equal rights in various international contexts. This work included the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI adopting a joint declaration and deciding on a programme with the title “Pushing for Progress” for the period 2025–2027. Furthermore, a new Nordic cooperation programme for gender equality and LGBTI for the period 2025–2030 was developed.

The work for LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities in Sweden is part of the implementation of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020–2025. There is also potential for EU cooperation in this area and national efforts in Sweden to reinforce each other, which can be achieved, for example, through mutual sharing of experiences and setting standards for how to design the strategic work in this area. The European Commission’s Political Guidelines for 2024–2029 tasked the Commission with proposing an updated strategy on LGBTIQ equality for the period post-2025. This is part

of the Commission's ongoing efforts to build a Union of equality. Swedish efforts in this area are expected to continue contributing to the work at EU level, just as the EU's work can support the national level in Sweden and in other Member States. At EU level, Member States share knowledge and develop methodological support within a group set up for this purpose under the European Commission's High Level Group on Non-discrimination, Equality and Diversity.

Within the Council of Europe, work for LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities is implemented within the framework of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI). An expert committee on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics has been set up to bring together expertise from the Member States. The main purpose of the expert committee is to support the Member States in the development and implementation of effective measures in this area, for example, through the development of recommendations and methodological support.

1.6 Timetable

Work on this Action plan began in February 2024, when a focused discussion with civil society organisations was conducted to seek their views on the content of the Action plan. Meetings were also held with the LGBTIQ strategic authorities during the year for the same purpose.

The Action plan contains measures for the period 2024–2027. A number of initiatives for LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities that were decided earlier were ongoing in 2024 and the Government has also decided on new initiatives that form part of the Action plan.

1.7 Budget

In addition to permanent funding of SEK 23.3 million per year, SEK 10 million per year has been added to the area for the years 2023–2024, with a similar-size boost in funding anticipated for the years 2025–2027. In addition to the resources specifically allocated to the work of strengthening equal rights for LGBTIQ persons, some of the measures in the Action plan are financed in whole or in part with funds from other expenditure areas. This is because work to achieve equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons is carried out cross-sectorally in several different policy areas.

1.8 Structure of the Action plan

Following the introductory section, there is a section on the structure of the work for LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities. It describes how this work is structured with focus areas and LGBTIQ strategic authorities. Sections on each focus area then follow. Each focus area section begins with a brief status report followed by a brief description of the measures in the focus area.

2. Structure of the work for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons

2.1 Focus areas

The following focus areas were part of the previous Action plan. They are still considered as central in the work to promote equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons and that is why they remain in the updated Action plan. They cover areas of society that require special focus and they also aim to create a life cycle perspective, i.e. to take into account the rights and opportunities of LGBTIQ persons through different stages in life.

- Violence, discrimination and other abuses
- Health, healthcare and social services
- Working life
- Young LGBTIQ persons
- Older LGBTIQ persons
- Private and family life
- Civil society
- Cultural sector

Efforts carried out in the focus areas need to be concerted, structured and long-term. For each focus area, there is an explicit objective that is based on the objectives already decided by the Government and the Riksdag (the Swedish parliament) for each policy area. The fact that the objectives are based on the current objectives for the various policy areas shows that the aim is to integrate work for LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities into each policy area.

Because the focus areas are based on different policy areas with different conditions, they also differ in terms of form and content in this Action plan. Developments in the different focus areas need to be taken into account in the long-term work to promote equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons.

2.2 The Equality Ombudsman

The basic mission of the Equality Ombudsman includes combating discrimination and promoting equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, transgender identity or expression. The Equality

Ombudsman is therefore an important actor in the work with the Action plan. For example, the Equality Ombudsman implements various forms of dialogue and training, develops and communicates information about discrimination and communicates in other ways with rights-holders and duty-bearers.

2.3 Strategic authorities

The following government agencies have been appointed as strategic authorities for the work to promote equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons:

- The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden
- Public Health Agency of Sweden
- The Living History Forum
- Swedish Gender Equality Agency
- Swedish Migration Agency
- Family Law and Parental Support Authority
- Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society
- Swedish Police Authority
- National Board of Health and Welfare
- Swedish Arts Council
- Swedish National Agency for Education.

The Government now also appoints the Swedish Work Environment Authority and the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise as strategic authorities for the Working life focus area, where strategic authorities have been lacking (A2025/00044, A2025/00045).

Being a strategic authority means that the authority is tasked with promoting equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons in its sphere of activity. This means, among other things, that an LGBTIQ perspective must be integrated and made visible in the activities of the authority.

In the Action plan, the strategic authorities are listed under the focus areas where their activities are considered to have the greatest impact on the achievement of the objectives. However, this should not be taken to mean that each authority is responsible for all the issues grouped under a focus area, or that their role as a strategic authority is limited to a specific focus area. A number of the strategic authorities pursue activities that touch on

several of the focus areas, and all of them thus constitute a concerted force for the implementation of the strategy. For this to be done as efficiently as possible, the starting point is that the strategic authorities are inspired by and learn from each other's work.

In addition to its task as an LGBTIQ strategic authority, the Public Health Agency of Sweden is tasked with supporting, coordinating and monitoring the work of the LGBTIQ strategic authorities within the context of the Strategy and the Action plan for the equal rights and opportunities of LGBTIQ persons. This means that the Public Health Agency is to support the LGBTIQ strategic authorities in their work to integrate the LGBTIQ perspective into their activities, to support cooperation between the strategic authorities, and to compile and analyse the results of their work.

Relevant parts of the support provided by the Public Health Agency should be planned and offered in cooperation with the Equality Ombudsman. In particular, the cooperation with the Equality Ombudsman should aim to highlight the work to combat discrimination and to promote equal rights and opportunities.

2.4 Coordination, support and follow-up

2.4.1 Status report

Since December 2021, the Public Health Agency of Sweden has been tasked with supporting, coordinating and monitoring the work of the LGBTIQ strategic authorities within the context of the Strategy for equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, and the Action plan for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons that were adopted in January 2021.

The increased level of coordination and support that the Public Health Agency has contributed to the work has been positive for the government agencies' work within the framework of the Strategy and the Action plan. All in all, these efforts are judged to have increased knowledge about and highlighted the situation of LGBTIQ persons, even though challenges remain.

It is also clear from the Public Health Agency's report that most of the LGBTIQ strategic authorities have strengthened their conditions for

functioning as LGBTIQ strategic authorities in their activities, in particular their internal organisations and in producing knowledge. However, there are differences in the level of activity of these authorities.

In order to support them, the Public Health Agency has developed new forms for monitoring developments in the external environment and developed a quick reference guide that aims to support the authorities in their work by providing them with more accurately targeted analyses and knowledge bases, and also mapped models for monitoring progress.

The report also highlights many of the success factors for the LGBTIQ strategic authorities' work. Examples include a working group for co-organising LGBTIQ issues with other cross-sectoral perspectives, the joint network of the LGBTIQ strategic authorities coordinated by the Public Health Agency, and continuous dialogue with civil society's LGBTIQ organisations.

At meetings with the LGBTIQ strategic authorities, they have stated that the network that the Public Health Agency coordinates is working very well. However, they have requested clearer objectives and interim targets for the work to promote equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons.

It is important that there are action plans that provide guidance and are adapted for all of the authorities' respective activities. The task of being a strategic authority includes identifying and reporting on development needs, attainment of objectives, and activities. However, there are differences in how far these authorities have progressed in this work, and therefore new interim targets and indicators should be developed in consultation with the strategic authorities.

There is therefore reason to task the Public Health Agency of Sweden with continuing its work of coordinating, supporting and monitoring progress in the work of the LGBTIQ strategic authorities, and to also include work with interim targets, indicators and authority-specific action plans in this task.

2.4.2 Measures

The Public Health Agency of Sweden is now tasked with coordinating, supporting and monitoring progress in the work of the LGBTIQ strategic authorities within the context of the Strategy for equal rights and

opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, as well as this Action plan for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons until 2027 (A2025/00043). In addition to the duties that the Public Health Agency has under its current task, the Agency will also be tasked with providing support to the LGBTIQ strategic authorities in developing, or further developing, action plans or the equivalent specific for each authority for its LGBTIQ strategic work and, in consultation with the LGBTIQ strategic authorities, developing interim targets for each focus area based on the Government's stated objectives in this Action plan as well indicators.

3. Focus area: Violence, discrimination and other abuses

Objective: To end LGBTIQ persons exposure to violence, discrimination and other abuses. No one should have to endure violence, discrimination and other abuses regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. All of Sweden should be a safe country to live in, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Strategic authorities: The Swedish Gender Equality Agency, Swedish Police Authority, Swedish Migration Agency, and the Living History Forum.

For information about the duties of the Equality Ombudsman in this work, see the section on the structure of the work for LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities.

3.1 LGBTIQ-related hate crime and hostility

3.1.1 Status report

According to the report “EU LGBTIQ Survey III” published by the European Union’s Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 51% of respondents in Sweden reported that prejudice and intolerance towards LGBTIQ persons has risen in the past five years (FRA 2024). This is in line with the picture of a deteriorating situation with regard to safety that many representatives of organisations working for the equal rights and opportunities of LGBTIQ persons (LGBTIQ organisations) have conveyed in meetings with the Government. A number of the representatives have emphasised that their members are experiencing an increased threat scenario and discrimination in their everyday lives. Representatives have also stated that this can lead to self-censorship, which has been identified as a particular threat to democracy. The same report shows that 32% of persons in same-sex relationships in Sweden often or always avoid holding hands in public with their partner, that 15% of LGBTIQ persons in Sweden often or always avoid certain places for fear of being assaulted, and that only 64% of LGBTIQ persons are fairly or very open about their LGBTIQ identity in Sweden.

According to The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) report “Polisanmälda hatbrott 2022” (2023) (English summary: Hate crimes reported to the police in 2022), the police identified LGBTIQ-related hate crime motives in 340 offences reported to the police in 2022. This was a

decrease of 131 offences reported to the police compared to 2020, when the figure was 471 offences with LGBTIQ-related hate crime motives. The category includes homophobic hate crimes, transphobic hate crimes and other LGBTIQ-related hate crimes. Homophobic hate crimes were the largest proportion. Molestation was the most common offence reported. A clearly discernible pattern is that men are the most victimised in all the aforementioned LGBTIQ categories. The most common crime scene was in the victim's home or near the victim's home. Digital environments as a crime scene accounted for almost one third of the crime scenes in reports of LGBTIQ-related hate crimes.

In 2020, The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention also studied hate crimes reported to the police with a digital crime scene (Brå 2022). This study showed that homophobic hate crime motives were the most common among LGBTIQ-related hate crime motives. A common example of a digital hate crime with a homophobic motive was that the perpetrator threatened to harm or kill the victim via a digital call and communication service because of the victim's perceived homosexual orientation.

Since 2021, the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) has been tasked with mapping the incidence of different forms of racism in digital environments. The Agency has also been tasked with mapping and analysing violent extremist propaganda with a particular focus on right-wing extremist and racist content that is spread on the Internet. The report "Digitalt slagfält – En studie av radikalnationalistiska digitala miljöer" (Digital battleground – a study of radical nationalist digital environments) concludes that dehumanising language is used about LGBTIQ persons in the digital environments investigated – a frequently used way to make individuals or groups legitimate targets for violence (FOI 2019).

The new National strategy against violent extremism and terrorism (Govt Comm 2023/24:56) sets out the direction for continuing work against hate crimes, including homophobic and transphobic hate crimes. The Strategy states that the Swedish Police Authority needs to continue to develop its work to investigate and prosecute persons for hate crimes and other crimes that threaten democracy, and that the Police Authority and other government agencies need to develop their work to combat IT-related hate crimes and other crimes that threaten democracy. At the same time as the Strategy was adopted, it was decided to task the Swedish Police Authority,

Swedish Security Service, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency and The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention with incorporating the Strategy into their activities and ensuring that their work was aligned with the Strategy.

In March 2024, the Government adopted the bill “En tydligare bestämmelse om hets mot folkgrupp” (A clearer provision on agitation against a population group, govt bill 2023/24:93). The bill proposed that the provisions on agitation against a population group in the Freedom of the Press Act and the Criminal Code should be expanded and clarified. One of the proposals was that criminal liability for agitation against a population group should also apply to actions against individuals who are members of a protected group, for example based on their sexual orientation. The proposal also means that it should be possible to accord individuals the status of an injured party with the right to damages. These amendments to the Criminal Code entered into force on 1 July 2024. It is proposed that corresponding amendments to the Freedom of the Press Act should enter into force on 1 January 2027.

Attitude surveys constitute one of several important sources of knowledge about the prevalence of various forms of intolerance in society. For some years, the Living History Forum has been conducting attitude surveys as a way to acquire knowledge about how prevalent different attitudes are towards different groups, and how they trend over time. To be able to follow the trend over time and enable better, and better targeted, interventions as part of the work to combat intolerance towards LGBTIQ persons among others, there is a need for knowledge about attitudes concerning various forms of intolerance.

3.1.2 Measures

- The Swedish Police Authority should develop its work to investigate and prosecute persons for hate crimes and other offences that threaten democracy, as well as its work to combat cybercrime with a hate motive and other offences that threaten democracy. The Swedish Police Authority must also maintain continuous dialogue and cooperation with groups who experience that they are at risk of hate crime. The final report on this task must be submitted by 1 September 2026 at the latest.

- The Swedish Crime Victim Authority is tasked with monitoring what the information initiatives from previous tasks have meant for persons who have been victims of cybercrime. The Authority is to develop information initiatives and gather knowledge about the Internet as a crime scene, and about the extent and mechanisms of online hate speech. The final report on this task must be submitted by 05 June 2026 at the latest.
- The Swedish Crime Victim Authority is tasked with developing and communicating information to those who are at risk of being or have been subjected to hate crime. This work is to include efforts targeting those working in government agencies and civil society who encounter persons who have been subjected to hate crimes with various motives. The starting point for this should be that it will result in more persons reporting incidents that may constitute hate crime. The final report for this task must be submitted by 1 March 2026 at the latest.
- The Swedish Crime Victim Authority is also tasked with developing and deepening the information in the guide for victims of crime (“Brottsofferguiden”) and carrying out information initiatives on how the guide can help victims of crime. Its purpose is to make the rights of victims of crime accessible in a way that covers all aspects and is easy to comprehend. The objective is to make the information in the guide as comprehensive as possible for all victims of crime, with a special focus on information for victims of men’s violence against women, domestic violence, and honour-based violence and oppression, as well as victims of prostitution and human trafficking and offences of a similar kind. The information should also be adapted to the target group for persons in particularly vulnerable situations such as persons with disabilities, children and young persons, LGBTIQ persons, and older persons. The final report on this task will be submitted on 25 May 2026.
- In 2024 and 2025, the Swedish Agency for the Media is tasked to conduct a broad and long-term sustainable national initiative to strengthen the population’s media and information literacy (MIL) – in a time of AI and disinformation. The final report on this task will be submitted by 30 April 2026 at the latest.

- The Living History Forum is tasked with conducting a study of attitudes on intolerance in the Swedish population. This task includes investigating attitudes and beliefs about vulnerable groups such as LGBTIQ persons. Within the context of this work, the Living History Forum is to highlight common patterns but also common differences in attitudes, and to analyse their covariation with factors such as age, gender, education, Swedish or foreign background, and socio-economic situation, as well as where in the country, and in what type of geographical area, the respondent resides. The final report on this task must be submitted by 1 March 2027 at the latest.
- The Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) is now tasked with mapping the prevalence of hostility towards LGBTIQ persons in digital environments (A2025/00046). This task includes mapping and analysing the prevalence of hostility towards LGBTIQ persons, and how it manifests itself in different digital environments that have a connection to Sweden, including in the form of code words, images, etc. FOI is also required to specifically investigate the prevalence of hostility towards homosexuals, bisexuals, transgender persons, queer and intersex persons in this task. The task includes producing analysis reports and communicating the knowledge produced within the task.
- The Government intends to commission an in-depth study of LGBTIQ-related hate crime to increase knowledge and strengthen preventive efforts.

3.2 Violence and other abuses

3.2.1 Status report

At meetings with the Government, representatives of civil society organisations working for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons have raised the issue of domestic violence and how the term “men’s violence against women” risks becoming problematic. They have also raised the need for a prohibition on “conversion practices”.

The prevalence of domestic violence among LGBTIQ persons follows the same pattern as domestic violence in heterosexual relationships, but as an LGBTIQ person, another obstacle to seeking support in this situation can be a perceived risk of being discriminated against and being treated with

prejudice and a lack of understanding in activities where knowledge about LGBTIQ person is lacking. LGBTIQ persons are also particularly vulnerable in contexts where honour-based violence and oppression occur.

Heteronormative beliefs are central in an honour-based culture, and can mean that a sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that violates the norm is seen as a threat to the family's honour. Young LGBTIQ persons in particular are at risk of honour-based violence and oppression, including "conversion practices". It is extremely important that all of the measures taken by the relevant actors to detect violent victimisation and to offer support and protection cover LGBTIQ persons, and that other factors that may increase their victimisation, or where adapted support may be needed based on other special needs, are taken into account in this work. LGBTIQ persons need to know where they can turn if they are subjected to violence, and they need to feel assured that the professionals they encounter have sufficient knowledge.

In the report "Unga hbtq-personers utsatthet för omvändelseförsök i Sverige" (Young LGBTIQ persons exposure to conversion practices in Sweden), the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) uses the following definition of 'conversion practices': pressure and coercion aimed at inducing someone to change, permanently conceal or refrain from living in accordance with their sexual orientation or gender identity or expressing gender in the way they personally wish (MUCF 2022). In interviews with professionals and LGBTIQ persons who have lived or live in families that have honour-based norms, as well as documented stories from young LGBTIQ persons, it appears that young LGBTIQ persons are prevented from shaping their own lives based on their identity and their own wishes, live an unsafe and insecure life, are subjected to mental and physical violence, and suffer from mental illness, and that there is widespread collective pressure on them to adapt themselves to prescribed norms. A common factor for those interviewed is perceived loneliness.

According to the report "EU LGBTIQ Survey III" by the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 40% of LGBTIQ persons in Sweden reported that violence towards them has risen in the past five years (FRA 2024). According to the same report, 21% of LGBTIQ persons in Sweden had experienced a 'conversion practice' intended to make them change their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (FRA 2024).

On 30 June 2023, the Inquiry on measures to combat control of girls' and women's sexuality submitted its report "Förstärkt skydd för den personliga integriteten – Behovet av åtgärder mot oskuldskontroller, oskuldsintyg och oskuldsingrepp samt omvändelseförsök" (SOU 2023:37) (Strengthened protection for personal integrity – the need for measures against virginity testing, virginity certification and hymen reconstruction surgery, and conversion practices). The Inquiry made the assessment that a special provision that criminalises conversion practices targeting LGBTQ persons should not be introduced, nor that conversion practices should be introduced as a ground for increased punishment. The reasons for this assessment according to the Inquiry are that the current provisions provide a good basis for imposing sufficiently severe penalties for conversion practices, since the most serious forms of coercion that occur in Sweden today already constitute an offence. The question of how conversion practices under threat or otherwise coerce someone into attempting to change their sexual orientation can be countered in an effective and appropriate way is subject for analysis in the Government Offices.

All parts of the National strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women includes LGBTIQ persons exposure to domestic violence, honour-based violence and oppression, as well as prostitution and human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation (Govt Comm 2016/17:10). The Swedish Agency for Public Management's analysis of the government agencies' work in implementing the National strategy indicates that the government agencies are taking into account certain starting points of the strategy to only a limited extent. This includes the starting point concerning the rights of LGBTIQ persons. In the Swedish Agency for Public Management's survey of civil society organisations, it also emerged that several organisations emphasised that the municipalities and regions need more knowledge and to become better at providing support to LGBTIQ persons who are the victims of violence.

3.2.2 Measures

- In order to ensure that the work to prevent and combat men's violence against women, domestic violence, honour-based violence and oppression, as well as prostitution and human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, is coordinated, long-term and effective, the Government has adopted an Action programme for 2024–2026. Knowledge about and support for particularly vulnerable groups, such as

LGBTIQ persons, should be taken into account in all aspects of this work.

- The Swedish Gender Equality Agency has been tasked with mapping the prevalence and risk of domestic violence among LGBTIQ persons, analysing the need for interventions, and proposing interventions aimed at both the target group and relevant occupational groups. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency will present the final report on this task by 31 March 2025 at the latest.
- The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has been tasked with carrying out an in-depth analysis of the need for support initiatives to combat honour-based violence and oppression, including the prevalence of ‘conversion practices’ targeting young LGBTQI persons. Where necessary, the Agency is to develop such support initiatives and subsequently develop and communicate information about the available support initiatives. The Agency should also take into account that children and young persons’ themselves need to get information about conversion practices and the support available to them in such situations. The final report on this task must be submitted by 31 March 2026 at the latest.
- The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society is tasked with developing and communicating information initiatives and knowledge support aimed at preventing young persons from being exploited for sexual or pornographic purposes, or subjected to sexual violence, mistreatment or abuses, either digitally or physically. The task was modified in June 2024 so that the Agency’s knowledge support and information initiatives can now target professionals and volunteers who encounter young persons, with a particular focus on reaching young persons who are at risk of sexual exploitation, such as young LGBTIQ persons, young persons with disabilities, and children and young persons placed in care. The support can concern both victims and perpetrators. The final report on this task must be submitted by 31 March 2028 at the latest.
- The National Centre for Knowledge on Men’s Violence Against Women (NCK) at Uppsala University has established a helpline for transgender and non-binary persons. Transgender and non-binary persons who have

been subjected to domestic violence and sexual assault can call the helpline.

- In June 2024, NCK was tasked with introducing an EU-wide harmonised helpline for victims of men's violence against women, domestic violence and honour-based oppression, including LGBTIQ persons.
- The Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2024 has tasked Nordic Information on Gender (NIKK) with conducting a review of how the Nordic countries are working to combat honour-based violence and oppression, including against LGBTIQ persons. The project will map definitions and identified challenges, as well as how to organise the work to respond to victims. The project also includes a review of national legislation on honour-based violence and oppression in the Nordic countries. The period for the study is 2024–2025.
- The Inquiry on strengthened measures to combat honour-based violence and oppression (Ju 2024:1) is tasked with reviewing a number of criminal and private law matters with the aim of producing proposals that reflect a stricter approach to honour-based violence and oppression, including taking a position on whether the penalty scales for certain honour-based offences should be increased (ToR 2024:8). The Inquiry must be presented by 18 April 2025 at the latest.

3.3 Work to combat discrimination and for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons

3.3.1 Status report

Discrimination and other barriers that stand in the way of persons enjoying equal rights and opportunities in life are a serious social problem. They must be continue to be combated. The principle of non-discrimination is central in Swedish legislation as it is in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Measures which aim to prevent and combat discrimination are essential to ensuring that the equal value of all persons is respected. Preventing all forms of discrimination is therefore an important part of the work for equality and participation. The Equality Ombudsman has a central role in this work.

The report “EU LGBTIQ Survey III”, published by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), shows that discrimination affects

LGBTIQ persons in Sweden in many areas of life, such as visiting restaurants, in shops or hospitals. Of the LGBTIQ respondents to the survey in Sweden, 21% reported that they had experienced discrimination in at least one area of their lives and 10% reported that they had experienced discrimination in the workplace or when applying for a job (FRA 2024).

The number of complaints of discrimination to the Equality Ombudsman related to the grounds sexual orientation and gender identity or expression has increased in recent years. The statistics on these complaints do not give the full picture of what discrimination in the community looks like. The Equality Ombudsman report “Statistics 2015–2023” shows that the actual number of individuals who feel that they have been the victim of discrimination is higher than the number of complaints that come in to the Equality Ombudsman (the Equality Ombudsman, 2024).

The prohibition of discrimination currently applies, for example, to labour market policy activities and within social services. In other parts of public activities, protection is limited to when the individual has contact with the government agency, for example when the agency provides information, guidance or advice. Several international monitoring bodies such as the UN’s Human Rights Committee and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance have given Sweden recommendations to expand protection against discrimination in these respects. The current legislation means in fact that individuals have weaker protection against discrimination in their contacts with some government agencies compared to others.

Improving knowledge for public sector employees about LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities is important. Under the Discrimination Act (2008:567), discrimination is prohibited, for example, in the reception of members of the public by public sector employees. The prohibition covers the grounds of discrimination sexual orientation, and transgender identity or expression. The Living History Forum currently offers an online course titled “Kunskap om hbtqi och likvärdigt bemötande” (Knowledge about LGBTIQ and equal treatment) for public sector employees. According to the Living History Forum, there is also a demand for educator-led training for the target group.

The work to combat discrimination is a cross-sectoral issue and is therefore also reported in the sections on other focus areas.

3.3.2 Measures

- The Living History Forum is tasked with developing knowledge support on LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities for public sector employees. The aim is to create the conditions for improving knowledge about LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities. The task to develop knowledge support includes producing continuing professional development material based on the existing online course “Kunskap om hbtqi och likvärdigt bemötande” (Knowledge about LGBTIQ and equal treatment), providing continuing professional development courses based on the material and making the material available. The Living History Forum must submit its final report on this task by 1 March 2027 at the latest.
- The Government intends to draft a legislative proposal on expanded protection against discrimination in public sector activities.

3.4 Work with legal certainty and equal treatment in the asylum process

3.4.1 Status report

LGBTIQ persons in a migration situation can be a vulnerable group in many respects, not least as asylum seekers. It can pose particular challenges ensuring that LGBTIQ persons seeking asylum or residence permits on any other basis in Sweden receive safe and equal treatment. Moreover, ensuring that decision-makers and others who interact with LGBTIQ persons during the asylum process have sufficient knowledge is an important issue of legal certainty.

Swedish migration policy and legislation are based on Sweden's international commitments. Under the Aliens Act (2005:716), a person who has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of gender, sexual orientation or other membership of a particular social group is covered by the definition of refugee, and such persecution may thus constitute grounds for asylum. For the Government, it is important that there is compliance with EU law, that Sweden's human rights commitments are respected, and that the right to seek asylum and an individual examination of the grounds for asylum are upheld. The human rights of refugees and asylum seekers must be respected, and LGBTIQ persons seeking asylum in Sweden must, just like everyone else, receive a legally certain examination and good and equal treatment.

In many parts of the world, LGBTIQ persons continue to be subjected to violence and discrimination. Homosexuality is still forbidden in many countries – some countries even apply the death penalty for same-sex sexual relations. Even where this type of prohibitive legislation is rarely applied, the social climate is affected by the legitimisation of discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ persons or persons perceived to be LGBTIQ.

On 7 October 2024, the Swedish Agency for Public Management published its report “Många öar små – Migrationsverkets styrning och uppföljning av den rättsliga kvaliteten i asylprocessen” (Many islets small – The Swedish Migration Agency’s governance and monitoring of the legal quality in the asylum process) (Swedish Agency for Public Management 2024). The report lends support to the fact that LGBTIQ issues are difficult to examine in a uniform and legally certain way, in part because these issues often require difficult assessments of individuals’ emotions and internal processes of change.

3.4.2 Measures

- On 4 November 2024, the Government submitted a Bill to the Riksdag with proposals which aim to house asylum seekers in accommodation operated by the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as proposals for a statutory obligation to participate in an introduction to Swedish society called the ‘social introduction’. The social introduction includes information about the rights of LGBTIQ persons and where to turn if subjected to any kind of threat or oppression. The Government assesses that the proposals will enhance the chances of detecting violence, threats and oppression, and result in more persons actually participating in the social introduction. It is proposed that the legislative amendments will enter into force on 1 March 2025.
- The Swedish Migration Agency is tasked with preparing for this reformed reception system. The Agency’s report on this task must be submitted no later than 31 January 2025 and include an analysis and account of how safety and security, as well as the needs and rights of LGBTIQ persons (and other vulnerable groups), will be met in the reformed reception system.
- Based on the conclusions of the Swedish Agency for Public Management in the above-mentioned report “Many islets small – The Swedish

Migration Agency's governance and monitoring of the legal quality of the asylum process", in its 2025 appropriation directions the Government has tasked the Swedish Migration Agency with taking measures to ensure that case management is consistent and legally certain.

4. Focus area: Health, healthcare and social services

Objective: Equal opportunities and conditions to achieve good health and obtain equal healthcare and social care regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Strategic authorities: The Public Health Agency of Sweden and the National Board of Health and Welfare.

4.1 Health

4.1.1 Status report

The majority of the Swedish population perceive their health to be good, but there are health inequalities between different groups. Research shows that homosexuals, bisexuals, queer and transgender persons and others have poor health compared to the rest of the population. This is particularly true regarding mental health, especially for transgender persons.

The report “I am not alone, there are others like me” (MUCF 2022) shows that health among young LGBTIQ persons is worse than among young cishet persons (meaning persons who are both cisgender and heterosexual). This is true for both physical and mental health, but the difference is greatest in regard to mental health. Only one third of young LGBTIQ persons consider themselves to have good mental health. Diagnosed depression, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts are more common among young LGBTIQ persons compared to young cishet persons. About one in five young LGBTIQ persons have considered suicide at some point, and suicidal thoughts are about four times as common among young LGBTIQ persons as among young cishet persons. According to the report “EU LGBTIQ Survey III” by the European Union’s Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 13% of the LGBTIQ respondents in Sweden reported that they often or always think about committing suicide (FRA 2024).

The health discrepancies can be partly explained by the fact that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons are more exposed to discrimination, harassment, violence and threats due to the communities’ negative ideas about for example, their gender identity.

The report “I am not alone, there are others like me” (MUCF 2022) shows that it is less common for young LGBTIQ persons with disabilities (41%) to

assess their own health as “fairly good” or “very good” compared to young LGBTIQ persons without disabilities (65%).

The public health policy needs to continue working towards the goal of creating the societal conditions for good and equal health in the entire population and put an end to the avoidable health inequalities within a generation.

The Swedish population has good sexual and reproductive health compared to other countries. However according to the Public Health Agency of Sweden, certain groups, including LGBTIQ persons, need special support in the Government’s work for good and equal sexual and reproductive health and rights. An action plan was added to the National strategy for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in 2023. In this Strategy and its Action plan, LGBTIQ persons are highlighted as a prioritised in work with the national SRHR, given that they generally have a target group that needs to be poorer basis for good sexual and reproductive health than the rest of the population.

4.1.2 Measures

- The Public Health Agency of Sweden is tasked with compiling the current state of knowledge and identifying knowledge gaps related to equal opportunities for health, as well as living conditions and lifestyles among LGBTIQ persons. This includes investigating the underlying reasons for these differences in opportunities for good health. These documents taken together will then form a basis for future work for LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities for good and equal health. The final report on the task will be submitted in March 2025.
- The Public Health Agency of Sweden is tasked with producing and presenting a national action plan against HIV/AIDS and certain other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) by 1 June 2025. The Public Health Agency presented an updated strategy for work to combat HIV/AIDS and certain other STIs on 29 July 2024. Among other things, the strategy highlights men who have sex with men and transgender persons as prioritized groups in the work against HIV and STIs. Prevention and support initiatives for HI persons V and STIs should include an understanding that the behaviour of is influenced by many factors,

including their living conditions, which in turn shape their empowerment and scope for action.

- The Government intends to present a new strategy for mental health and suicide prevention. This will give Sweden a strategy for mental health and suicide prevention that is widely supported and that engages relevant actors. The strategy is an important part of society's joint efforts to improve mental well-being and strengthen suicide prevention efforts.
- Each year, the National Board of Health and Welfare distributes central government grants in accordance with the Ordinance on Government Grants to Municipalities and Regions (2022:1220) for initiatives to promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. The Government has added extra funds for the years 2023 and 2024.

4.2 Healthcare

4.2.1 Status report

Equal care means that healthcare and medical treatment should be offered on equal terms to all persons. Persons should also be received and treated equally in the healthcare system regardless of, for example, personal characteristics, place of residence, age, gender, gender identity, gender expression, disability, education, social status, ethnic or religious affiliation or sexual orientation.

In meetings with the Government, multiple representatives of LGBTIQ organisations have pointed out the need to shorten the queues for transgender persons in need of gender affirming care as well as the need to promote knowledge about transgender persons amongst healthcare employees. Mental illness and the risk of suicide among transgender persons have also been highlighted. Representatives of these organisations have also emphasised that the knowledge about as well as the attitudes towards LGBTIQ issues/needs amongst the healthcare staff is important to ensure that LGBTIQ persons are received well when seeking care. Representatives of these organisations have also highlighted the need for a changed attitude in healthcare and other professions, increased competence and increased resources in order to achieve this change. The need for enhanced knowledge about treating gender dysphoria has been particularly highlighted. They have

also argued that health promotion efforts should be highlighted as a perspective in the new Action plan, particularly with regard to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Representatives of the organisations have also expressed the need for raising the level of ambition in this area.

According to the report “Jag är inte ensam, det finns andra som jag” (I am not alone, there are others like me) by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), LGBTIQ persons often experience poor treatment in their contacts with the healthcare system. Many experience that their identity is questioned and that there is widespread ignorance about transgender issues in the healthcare system (MUCF 2022). In addition, the report “EU LGBTIQ Survey III” by the European Union’s Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) shows that 23% of LGBTIQ respondents in Sweden felt they had been discriminated against in the healthcare system in the past 12 months (FRA 2024).

The report “Living conditions for persons with intersex variation – Knowledge from a discrimination perspective” (The equality Ombudsman 2022) concludes that the Equality Ombudsman has not been able to identify any complaints regarding discrimination related to an intersex variation. There were also no cases in a Swedish court where discrimination or other abuse against persons with an intersex variation have come to trial. The Equality Ombudsman did however assess that there are areas of society where persons with an intersex variation live in a vulnerable situation and risk encountering various forms of discrimination. This vulnerability occurs in, for example, the healthcare system, but also in school, the workplace and certain other areas of society.

According to the report *Right to the highest attainable standard of health and access to healthcare for LGBTI people in Europe* (2024), only nine Member States, including Sweden, have national policies, guidelines and protocols on trans-specific healthcare (Council of Europe 2024). Sweden is also one of the few Member States that has implemented measures to ensure that transgender persons have access to adequate gender-affirming specialised care without being subject to unreasonable requirements.

Since 1 January 2024, gender dysphoria treatments are provided by the national specialised medical care (NHV) according to a decision by the National Board of Health and Welfare. The purpose of the change is to help

and ensure that healthcare is more equal across the country and to facilitate cooperation between different regions.

The Riksdag has adopted a new Act on Certain Surgical Procedures on the Genitalia (2024:237), and a new Act on Determining Gender in Certain Cases (2024:238).

This means that the process for changing the gender shown in the population register for a person has been separated from the process for surgical procedures on the genitalia. Concerning the Act on Determining Gender in Certain Cases, see the Private and family life focus area. Concerning the new Act on Certain Surgical Procedures on the Genitalia, which enters into force on 1 July 2025, no permission from the National Board of Health and Welfare will be required to undergo surgical procedures on the genitalia that aim to ensure that the person's body is consistent with their gender identity. However, as is currently the case, such procedures should be preceded by an investigation made by the healthcare system and can only be carried out on persons who have reached the age of 18 years. The age limit of 23 years or more remains for removal of the sex glands, unless there are exceptional grounds for doing so at an earlier age.

4.2.2 Measures

- The National Board of Health and Welfare has been tasked with implementing an information initiative aimed at health and social care professionals who encounter persons with gender dysphoria in the course of their work. The aim is to improve the way in which persons with gender dysphoria are received in the healthcare system. The Board will also develop the monitoring of transgender care and propose a method intended to track the prescription of puberty blockers and gender-affirming hormone therapy for persons with gender dysphoria. The Board has, among other things, produced the material "Ett bra bemötande, Till dig som möter transpersoner eller personer med funderingar kring sin könsidentitet i ditt arbete" (A good reception. For those who encounter transgender persons, or persons questioning their gender identity, in their work) (National Board of Health and Welfare 2024). A report on the task is to be presented in February 2025.
- In the period 2025–2029, the Swedish Agency for Health and Care Services Analysis will be monitoring the application of the new Act

(2024:238) on Determining Gender in Certain Cases and will evaluate its effects within three years of its entry into force. The final report on this task must be submitted by 15 June 2029 at the latest.

4.3 Social services

4.3.1 Status report

The social services are a key part of the Swedish welfare system and each municipality is responsible for the social services in its own geographical area. The initial provisions of the Social Services Act set out the overall objectives and fundamental principles for the social services. These objectives and fundamental principles are of great importance to how the social services' activities are directed and designed. Ultimately, the social services' objectives derive from the Swedish Constitution. Chapter 1, Article 2 of the Instrument of Government, one of the fundamental laws that make up the Swedish Constitution, states that public power shall be exercised with respect for the equal worth of all and the liberty and dignity of the individual. Human rights are important starting points for the social services and the design of social services initiatives.

Regarding care of older persons, a more detailed description is given under the focus area Older LGBTIQ persons.

4.3.2 Measures

- A new preventive Social Services Act is proposed to enter into force on 1 July 2025. In July 2024, the Government adopted the proposal referred to the Council on Legislation for consideration entitled “En förebyggande socialtjänstlag – för ökade rättigheter, skyldigheter och möjligheter”(A preventive Social Services Act – for improved rights, obligations and opportunities). The proposed legislation means that the social services will be required to work preventively and be easily accessible, and that the activities of social services must be conducted in accordance with science and proven experience. It is also proposed that gender equality will be included in the overall objectives for the social services, which means that the social services must promote equal and gender-equal living conditions. It is proposed that the new law will include a gender-neutral provision on support for victims of domestic violence.

5. Focus area: Working life

Objective: Good working conditions and opportunities for development at work, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

5.1 Status report

There are limited studies on the situation for LGBTIQ persons in working life. However, the studies that have been done indicate that the situation for LGBTIQ persons in working life is inferior to that of heterosexual cisgender persons.

The Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise (MYNAK) has compiled knowledge about LGBTIQ persons organisational and social working environments in the literature review “The organisational and social work environment of LGBTIQ people – A systematic literature review” (MYNAK 2022), which covers just under 300 studies, of which 12 were conducted in Sweden. According to the literature review, research indicates that LGBTIQ persons more often experience discrimination, harassment, bullying and microaggression in the workplace. The report also states that these experiences intersect with factors such as gender, ethnicity, professional position and age. Transgender and bisexual persons appear to be more often exposed to these behaviours than homosexual and heterosexual cisgender persons. There are those who state that they have chosen not to be open about their trans identity at work for fear of what the consequences might be. According to MYNAK, the results of the literature review pointed to the fact that various forms of organisational support are an important factor in protecting the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ persons in the work environment. A research-based guide for this purpose to support managers, HR staff, working groups, occupational health and safety representatives, and other individuals in key roles/positions of trust has been developed by MYNAK.

According to the report “Inte bara överleva utan faktiskt också leva” (Not just surviving but thriving) by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF), which highlights the living conditions of young LGBTIQ persons, there is a close link between work and the health and well-being of the individual (MUCF 2023). A good work environment enhances health and well-being while an adverse work environment increases the risk of ill-

health. Some LGBTIQ persons describe their workplaces as health-promoting free zones with an inclusive climate.

MYNAK's literature review, which was mentioned above, indicates that many LGBTIQ persons also experienced health-promoting factors in their work environment, often in parallel with negative experiences. This can include experiences of an organisational climate that is supportive of LGBTIQ persons, which can be linked to experiences of a good work environment, job satisfaction and health. This in turn can foster a willingness to be open about sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Gender-neutral changing rooms and toilets can also play a role in transgender persons experiences of a good work environment, as well as an employer reflecting on the informal and formal dress codes in the workplace.

Experiences from working life differ between different LGBTIQ individuals and groups, where some experience greater vulnerability than others. There is a significant lack of knowledge about the situation of transgender persons in the Swedish labour market.

A recently published thesis with the title "Labor, firm and wealth effects of gender and sexuality" (2024) shows that transgender persons in Sweden have a lower probability of employment and lower pay compared to cisgender persons in the Swedish population. A Nordic study with the title "Transpersoners arbetslivsvillkor i Norden" (Transpersons working conditions in the Nordic countries) (Nordic Information on Gender at the University of Gothenburg, NIKK 2024), which was produced on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers, gives a similar picture. According to the Nordic study, transgender persons as a group have higher unemployment than the general population and to a large extent experience discrimination and harassment in the labour market.

During autumn 2024, in its role as chair of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Sweden hosted a Nordic conference on the situation of transgender persons in working life organised by NIKK. The conference brought together experts and key actors in the field from across the region in order to create opportunities to establish contacts and strengthen the basis for ongoing dialogue and enhanced Nordic cooperation concerning the conditions for transgender persons.

For all focus areas except Working life, strategic authorities have been appointed, thereby giving them a prominent role in promoting equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons in their spheres of activity. The Working life focus area has been highlighted in government agency networks and dialogue with civil society, and it has also been noted that no strategic authorities have been appointed for the Working life focus area. As part of the work to strengthen and realise LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities in working life, the Government intends to appoint strategic authorities in this area.

5.2 Measures

- The Swedish Work Environment Authority and the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise have now been appointed as LGBTIQ strategic authorities tasked with promoting equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons in their respective spheres of activity (A2025/00044, A2025/00045).

6. Focus area: Young LGBTIQ persons

Objective: All young persons, including young LGBTIQ persons, are to be respected and have good living conditions and the power to shape their lives and influence societal development without being limited by stereotypical gender roles, coercion or oppression that reduce an individual's scope for action.

Strategic authorities: Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, Swedish National Agency for Education, and the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden.

6.1 Status report

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) has charted the health and living conditions of young LGBTIQ persons in the report “I am not alone, there are others like me” (MUCF 2022). This report shows that young LGBTIQ persons have poorer health than other young persons, and this is especially true when it comes to mental health. Only one third of young LGBTIQ persons consider themselves to have good mental health. About one in five young LGBTIQ persons have considered taking their own life at some point.

Children and young persons have the right to protection against violence and abuse. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has a broad definition of violence (Art. 19) that includes mental abuse and neglect. The violence that occurs specifically in young persons' couple relationships has relatively recently been identified and made visible, both in practice and in research.

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) has studied what measures can be taken in society to combat violence in young persons' couple relationships. The report “Våld i ungas parrelationer” (Violence in young persons' couple relationships) (The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention 2021:15) shows that there are large knowledge gaps in the area of violence in young person's couple relationships, including when it comes to LGBTIQ persons. While knowledge about the extent and nature of this violence is lacking, an LGBTIQ perspective is also often lacking in measures and interventions in this area.

The right to feel safe and included in school applies to all children and young persons. Despite this, the report “För en mer trygg och inkluderande skola för unga transpersoner och icke-binära” (Towards a more secure and inclusive school for young trans and non-binary pupils) shows that young LGBTIQ persons are more vulnerable than other young persons. School is experienced as an unsafe place where there is a great risk of being subjected to hatred, threats, bullying and violence. Transgender persons report a particular vulnerability, for example in connection with sports lessons. The child’s right to education and access to learning opportunities is compromised when they are subjected to violence in school settings, which is linked to adverse mental and physical health outcomes, as well as diminished academic performance and educational attainment. (The Ombudsman for Children 2022).

According to the report “EU LGBTIQ Survey III” by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), more than half of the respondents in Sweden reported that they have been subjected to bullying, ridicule, teasing, insults or threats due to their LGBTIQ identity during their school years. About one third of LGBTIQ students in Sweden hide their identity at school. At the same time, 42% of pupils in Sweden stated that the school often or always supports, defends or protects their rights as LGBTIQ individuals (FRA 2024).

There are studies that show that most schools do not address issues related to LGBTIQ individuals through promotion of rights and prevention of violence, for example in teaching or at the school level (The Ombudsman for Children 2022). According to the report “I am not alone, there are others like me”, Young persons report a perceived lack of knowledge among teachers and observe that schools tend to respond passively, or only takes action when individuals have the courage to highlight shortcomings. Enhancing competence about how limiting norms can lead to vulnerability and discrimination for young LGBTIQ pupils in schools is important for creating a safe environment in school for all (MUCF 2022).

Young LGBTIQ persons experience poorer opportunities in the labour market than young heterosexual cisgender persons, according to the above-mentioned report from MUCF. In addition to being subjected to victimising behaviour and intrusive questions, uncertainty about the attitudes of employers and colleagues towards LGBTIQI persons affects both the search for work and the work environment at a workplace. At the same time, there are also positive experiences of working life and some young persons have

not reflected very much about being an LGBTIQ person in relation to their work (MUCF 2022).

Children and young persons also have the right to meaningful leisure time. Access to meaningful recreational activities is an important part of ensuring good living conditions for children and young persons. The report “Ungas rätt till en meningsfull fritid – tillgång, trygghet och hinder” (Young persons right to meaningful leisure time – availability, safety and obstacles) shows that the majority of young LGBTIQ persons consider themselves to have great, or relatively great, opportunities to participate in various activities in their leisure time. The report highlights that certain groups, such as young LGBTIQ persons, face greater obstacles than other young persons in their leisure time. For example, almost one in four young LGBTIQ persons (23%) have refrained from participating in leisure activities for fear of being badly treated, compared with 14% among all young persons surveyed (MUCF 2020).

A prerequisite for ensuring meaningful leisure time for young persons, and especially for young LGBTIQ persons, is the availability of safe places to meet. In the report “Stärka förutsättningarna för att skapa mötesplatser för unga hbtqi-personer” (Strengthen the conditions for creating places to meet for young LGBTIQ persons) (MUCF 2022), young LGBTIQ persons describe the need for access to safe contexts for their leisure time. However, previous MUCF surveys have shown that the availability of places to meet for LGBTIQ persons is limited in large parts of the country, and many young LGBTIQ persons lack access to safe contexts. Young LGBTIQ persons having their own places to meet where they can feel a sense of community and feel safe, and can develop their identities, are important.

6.2 Measures

- MUCF is tasked with strengthening the conditions for creating and maintaining physical as well as digital places to meet for young LGBTIQ persons. A report on the task will be presented in March 2025.
- The Swedish Schools Inspectorate reviews Swedish schools’ work to prevent and respond to intolerance, oppression and violence, such as racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, and honour-based violence and oppression in the light of the revised curricula that came

into force in autumn 2022. A report on the task will be presented in April 2025.

- The Swedish National Agency for Education is tasked with strengthening the systematic work to combat honour-based violence and oppression, which includes LGBTIQ persons. A report on the task will be presented in December 2025.
- The Swedish Gender Equality Agency is tasked with preventing and combating violence in young persons' domestic relationships. The task covers both violent victimisation and the perpetration of violence in young persons' domestic relationships, including honour-based violence and oppression. The Agency is required to produce, communicate and make available support material to professionals who encounter young persons in their work, and to implement competence-enhancing initiatives. The Agency is also required to submit proposals on how to improve the work to prevent and detect violence in young persons' domestic relationships. Exposure to violence in particularly vulnerable groups, such as young LGBTIQ persons and young persons with disabilities, must be taken into account in these proposals. A report on the task will be presented by 31 March 2025 at the latest.
- The Living History Forum is tasked with conducting a study of Swedish school pupils' attitudes around intolerance. The task includes investigating school pupils' attitudes towards groups such as immigrants, Jews, Muslims, Roma and LGBTIQ persons. The study will also enhance knowledge about young persons lived experience of various forms of racism and intolerance. A report on the task will be presented in March 2026.
- MUCF is tasked with continuing to strengthen the conditions for school management teams and staff to promote a safe school and to combat homophobia, biphobia and transphobia among young persons.
- The Government has increased the central government grant that is allocated annually for initiatives that promote places for young LGBTIQ persons to meet in accordance with Ordinance (2021:227).

7. Focus area: Older LGBTIQ persons

Objective: Older LGBTIQ persons should be able to live openly and age safely while maintaining their independence, be treated with respect, and be offered equal healthcare and social care.

Strategic authority: National Board of Health and Welfare.

7.1 Status report

Older LGBTIQ persons have the right to be treated well and to obtain good and equal healthcare and social care. The generation of LGBTIQ persons who are older today have grown up in a society where same-sex sexuality was illegal or classed as an illness.

Equal healthcare means that health and medical care and treatment are offered on equal terms, with everyone being treated well. Social services should promote persons financial and social security, equal living conditions and active participation in society. In order for older LGBTIQ persons to receive the services to which they are entitled and to be treated well, municipalities and individual service providers working on behalf of the municipality must have knowledge of the living situation and needs of older LGBTIQ persons. The National Board of Health and Welfare has surveyed the healthcare and social care provided to older LGBTIQ persons in Sweden's municipalities. The survey "Kommunal vård och omsorg för äldre hbtqi-personer" (Municipal healthcare and social care for older LGBTIQ persons) (National Board of Health and Welfare 2023) shows that many older homosexual, bisexual and transgender persons feel anxious when they think about the future, for example because they do not get treated well in the social- and healthcare system or because the staff do not have LGBTIQ competence. The Board notes that there is a need to improve knowledge about LGBTIQ issues among health and social care professionals in order to assure the rights of older LGBTIQ persons. It also appears from the survey that too few municipalities are working to promote equal healthcare and social care for older LGBTIQ persons.

The Public Health Agency of Sweden has also mapped the health and living conditions of older LGBTIQ persons based on existing data collections, including the national public health survey "Hälsa på lika villkor" (Health on equal terms). The survey shows that older LGBTIQ persons have poorer living conditions, worse living conditions and poorer health outcomes than

the rest of the population (The Public Health Agency of Sweden 2023). The Agency has also identified areas in need of development as well as the need for enhanced knowledge and health promotion measures for older LGBTIQ persons.

The Nordic Council of Ministers commissioned a survey of the living conditions of older LGBTIQ persons, in particular in their encounters with the healthcare system. The report from this survey “He went back into the closet” (Nordic information on Gender, NIKK, University of Gothenburg 2023) shows, among other things, that older LGBTIQ persons regularly worry about what it will be like when they get to the point of being in need of care from others. These worries are linked to fears of a lack of knowledge about LGBTIQ persons in the care of older persons, and of being poorly treated by other residents or staff. Feeling safe helps a person to be open about their identity. An increased need for LGBTIQ competence in health and social care is noted in the report.

According to the report “Right to the highest attainable standard of health and access to healthcare for LGBTI people in Europe” (2024), Sweden is one of the few Member States to have information available about older LGBTIQ persons needs and health (Council of Europe 2024).

Being able to be open about one’s identity is of great importance to health. The staff’s competence and how they treat an older LGBTIQ person is often a decisive factor in how open older persons want to be about their sexual orientation and gender identity. The National Board of Health and Welfare assesses that there is a need for knowledge-enhancing material about LGBTIQ person that specifically targets healthcare and social care for older persons.

7.2 Measures

- The National Board of Health and Welfare has been tasked with strengthening LGBTIQ competence in healthcare and social care of older persons. The task includes developing and distributing knowledge-enhancing material on LGBTIQ questions in connection with healthcare and social care as it relates to older persons. The task aims to increase the LGBTIQ competence of different occupational groups within the municipal healthcare system as well as social services and their activities.

Older persons' LGBTIQ rights in relation to healthcare and social care are to be included. The assignment will be reported in March 2025.

- The Public Health Agency of Sweden is tasked with taking initiatives to strengthen and develop its work concerning the health and living conditions of older LGBTIQ persons. The task includes tracking knowledge in the area of ageing and older LGBTIQ persons health through monitoring, in-depth analyses and the dissemination of this knowledge. The assignment will be reported in March 2025.
- The National Board of Health and Welfare's competence goals for assistant nurses indicate the competence (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that the Board assesses are needed to perform the work of an assistant nurse with good quality. For example, it states that they should be able to treat persons as individuals and with respect, regardless of gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. Municipalities can receive central government grants through the Elderly care initiative when their staff who work with healthcare and social care for older persons participate in training that aims to give participants the competence specified in the National Board of Health and Welfare's competence goals for assistant nurses.

8. Focus area: Private and family life

Objective: The right to private life should be fully respected. This includes ensuring the right to privacy and family life. This applies regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Strategic authority: Family Law and Parental Support Authority.

8.1 Status report

At the time when the Children and Parents Code was created, the traditional nuclear family was the given family constellation. Today, family constellations can vary. Over the years, numerous measures have been taken to modernise the legislation and accommodate it to new models of family formation. Among other things, the option of assisted reproduction has been gradually expanded, and the abolition of the sterilisation requirement in establishing gender has enabled transgender persons to give birth or contribute sperm. In addition, the requirement that the child should have a genetic connection to at least one parent in the case of assisted reproduction has been removed. The rules on adoption have been modernised and it is now possible for both married and cohabiting couples as well as single persons to adopt. Since 2022, a presumption of parenthood applies to all couples, not only to married couples of different genders. In the same year, new equal rules on parenthood in international situations came into force.

Families take many different forms and have diverse needs. The parent of a child can transfer parental benefit to the other parent or to a person who, according to the Social Insurance Code, is considered equivalent to a parent, such as a cohabiting partner. As of 1 July 2024, it is also possible to transfer parental benefit to, for example, a close relative, provided they are insured for parental benefit. This option can be particularly valuable in families where more than two persons take parental responsibility for the child or for single parents. The option to transfer parental benefit provides parents with greater flexibility and more tools to manage their parental leave, and, strengthens freedom of choice, and can improve the conditions for combining family life with a high level of labour market participation.

It is important that the rules on parenthood – with the best interests of the child as a starting point – continue to develop in line with society in general. Every child should have a secure family situation and be able to grow up in a society that does not discriminate against persons on the basis of gender or

sexual orientation or different family constellations. In summer 2022, the Inquiry on legislation governing parental responsibility for all submitted the report “Alla tiders föräldraskap – ett stärkt skydd för barns familjeliv” (Inclusive rules on Parenthood– strengthened protection for the child’s family life) (SOU 2022:38). The Inquiry was tasked with proposing a more cohesive, gender-neutral regulation of parenthood and regulations governing parental responsibility that are adapted to differing family constellations.

It is becoming increasingly common for families to move within the EU. The different rules on parenthood in different Member States can mean that the parenthood of one partner is not valid in the Member State to which the family moves. In addition to the emotional bond between the child and parent, different rights and obligations are tied to parenthood. This includes the child’s and the parent’s rights to inheritance and the parent’s obligation to pay maintenance support for the child. In everyday life, parenthood enables an individual to represent the child in contacts with government agencies and schools.

In December 2022, the European Commission presented a proposal for a Regulation on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition of decisions and acceptance of authentic instruments in matters of parenthood in cross-border situations. The proposal applies to all children in the EU – irrespective of how the child was conceived and irrespective of the type of family of the child. Negotiations on the proposal are ongoing within the EU.

Persons who want a different gender than the one shown in the population register can apply for this change. In April 2024, the Riksdag decided that a new Act on Determining Gender in Certain Cases will come into force from 1 July 2025. At the same time, another new Act on Certain Surgical Procedures on the Genitalia comes into force. (For the Act on Certain Surgical Procedures on the Genitalia, see the focus area Health, healthcare and social services.) This means that the process for changing a person’s legal gender as shown in the population register has been separated from the process for surgical procedures on the genitalia. An overarching goal of the changes with regard to determining gender is to make it easier for individuals to change their gender as shown in the population register. A person may have their gender as shown in the population register changed after a simplified examination, normally by means of a simple medical examination of gender identity. The current age limit for changing one’s legal gender is 18

years. It is now being changed to 16 years with a custodian's written consent. The National Board of Health and Welfare will examine applications for a change of the gender shown in the population register in accordance with the new Act.

8.2 Measures

- The National Board of Health and Welfare has been tasked with developing new regulations concerning what an application for the determination of gender should contain and which occupational categories should be authorised to issue certificates in accordance with the new Act. The Board is also tasked with developing a solution enabling an effective and secure procedure for the application and identity verification. The regulations will enter into force on 1 July 2025. The National Board of Health and Welfare is also tasked with developing national knowledge support for the healthcare system's examination of gender identity based on the new Act on Determining Gender in Certain Cases. In addition, the Board is to carry out appropriate information initiatives based on the new Act on Determining Gender in Certain Cases. A report is to be presented on those parts of the task that relate to the knowledge support and a solution that enables an efficient and secure procedure for the application and identity verification at the same point in time. A report on the communication initiatives will be presented on 1 December 2025.

9. Focus area: Civil society

Objective: Strengthen the conditions for civil society organisations to promote equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons.

A key principle of policy in civil society is to respect the autonomy and independence of civil society. The Government has therefore not appointed a strategic authority for this focus area. Issues related to the potential of organisations to promote equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons will instead continue to be monitored by the Government Offices.

9.1 Status report

A strong civil society is of central importance for democracy and for respect for human rights. In a democratic society, persons are accorded equal value and rights, with equal opportunities to participate and have an influence. Civil society organisations' contributions to the work to promote equal rights and opportunities for LGBTIQ persons are central.

In recent years, civil society has been subject to a great deal of pressure. The COVID-19 pandemic had a major negative impact on associations' ability to pursue their activities. After the pandemic, new societal challenges occurred as a result of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, along with rising electricity prices and high inflation. The deterioration in the economic situation has been felt by non-profit associations.

Civil society plays an important role in shaping public opinion and as advocates. Dialogue with civil society is important for identifying challenges and needs for measures, and monitoring these in the work for LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities. The Government therefore carried out a focused discussion with civil society organisations in early 2024 to take advantage of knowledge and perspectives from civil society prior to producing this Action plan. During the focused discussion, many representatives from civil society described experiencing a deteriorating security situation for LGBTIQ persons and LGBTIQ organisations. Among other things, the representatives stated that they feel that the democratic space has shrunk in recent years. According to them, there is a risk of a widespread culture of silence, and that civil society is engaging in self-censorship to avoid threats and hatred.

For a long time, the public domain has supported civil society organisations, including through central government grants. In order to ensure that funds do not go to organisations whose activities are not compatible with the fundamental values of society, a majority of the regulations governing state aid include ‘democracy conditions’ on the activity. The democracy conditions have been criticised for containing unjustified differences and for being difficult to apply. On 27 March 2024, the Government decided on the Bill “Statens stöd till trossamfund och civilsamhället – enhetliga och rättssäkra villkor” (State aid to faith communities and civil society – uniform and legally certain terms (Govt Bill 2023/24:119), which was then adopted by the Riksdag in June 2024. In the Bill, the assessment is made that a clearer and more uniform democracy condition should be designed, and that it should be based on grounds for exclusion.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) states in the report “Organisationsbidragens användning och effekter” (Use and effects of organisation grants) that the results and effects described by the organisations can be attributed to the organisations being awarded organisation grants (MUCF 2024). These organisations often rely on grants for their activities, and in some cases they are crucial to their existence.

9.2 Measures

- The central government grant for security-enhancing measures to civil society organisations has increased in recent years. All in all, the funding for grants to civil society organisations amounts to SEK 74 million from 2024. This central government grant can be awarded to organisations that contribute to promoting human rights and safeguarding democracy in their activities, and whose activities are affected by fears of threats, violence or harassment related to sexual orientation, transgender identity or expression, or another circumstance.
- The Government has increased the central government grant that is distributed annually to organisations for homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals or persons with a transgender identity or expression in accordance with Ordinance (2008:349). The funds are used for activities that contribute to strengthening the standing of LGBTIQ persons in society.

- The Government intends to introduce new democracy conditions in Ordinance (2008:349) on central government grants to organisations for homosexual, bisexual, and transsexual persons or persons with transgender identity or expression. The purpose of the central government grant is to support the organisations' own initiatives and activities with the aim of strengthening the standing of LGBTIQ persons in society.
- The Government intends to maintain its continuous dialogue with civil society within the framework of this Action plan so as to strengthen LGBTIQ persons equal rights and opportunities.

9.3 Sports

Objective: Everyone – regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression – should be equally welcome in the sports community.

9.3.1 Status report

The sports movement is Sweden's biggest popular movement and is important for a sense of community and for public health. The Swedish Sports Confederation (RF) has a total of 72 specialist sport member associations comprising about 19,000 member sports clubs. In total, the specialist sports associations bring together about 3.3 million persons as members, which means that more than one in three Swedish residents between the ages of 6 and 80 were members of a sports club in 2023.

Sports policy is a specific part of policy for civil society. The starting point for sports policy is a free and independent sports movement that is inclusive and accessible. It is important that sports are open to everyone, regardless of age, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, belief, disability or social, ethnic and cultural background.

In MUCF's report "I'm not alone, there are others like me" it is clear that young LGBTIQ persons engage in sports, both within and outside associations, to a lesser extent than other young persons. It also shows that young LGBTIQ persons visit gyms and sports halls to a lesser extent. The overall picture is that young LGBTIQ persons face more obstacles and engage in sport to a lesser extent than other young persons (MUCF 2022).

Sports need to be safe and inclusive so that anyone who wants to can participate and be empowered to shape that sport on equal terms. Based on the sports movement's Strategy 2025 in general, and on the journey towards "inclusive sport for all" in particular, a variety of competence-enhancing initiatives have been carried out at different levels in order to include under-represented groups within the sports movement. The Swedish Sports Confederation and SISU Idrottsutbildarna (sports trainers association) work with support and educational initiatives targeting specialist sport associations concerning work to include LGBTIQ persons. These initiatives include in particular training to persuade associations and clubs to reflect on the norms and other types of barriers that might permeate their activities, and which could contribute to them attracting certain groups to a lesser extent than others.

Sports guidelines for children's and young persons' sports make it clear in multiple ways that the inclusion of LGBTIQ persons is important for sport to be safe and inclusive. Among other things, the Swedish Sports Confederation is working to develop guidelines for the inclusion of persons with trans experience and intersex variations. It is also now possible to state one's gender within the sports movement based on gender identity and not just legal gender in order to include transgender persons.

9.3.2 Measures

- The Government annually sets aside more than SEK 2 billion in support for sport. According to the 2025 guidelines for central government grants to sport, the Swedish Sports Confederation must report its work for safe sport and, based on the Ordinance (1999:1177) on central government grants for sports activities, report and comment on the support to activities that makes it possible for all persons to engage in sports and exercise. The Swedish Sports Confederation and SISU Idrottsutbildarna (sports trainers association) work with support and educational initiatives targeting specialist sport associations concerning work to include LGBTIQ persons. The Swedish Sports Confederation is working to develop guidelines for the inclusion of persons with trans experience and intersex variations.

10. Focus area: Cultural sector

Objective: Promote the cultural sector's potential to contribute to increased diversity and openness. LGBTIQ persons should be able to participate in and contribute to the development of culture.

Strategic authority: The Swedish Arts Council.

10.1 Status report

According to the national cultural policy objectives, culture should be a dynamic, challenging and independent force based on freedom of expression. Everyone should have the opportunity to participate in cultural life. Creativity, diversity and artistic quality should characterise the development of society.

The cultural sector is an important arena for discussion, influence and change. Being able to participate and recognise oneself in both culture and history and finding role models in the past are important for identity-building and self-esteem. LGBTIQ persons should be able to participate in and contribute to the development of culture. Diversity is a prerequisite for a vibrant cultural life and an open democracy.

In recent years, attention has been drawn to threats and hatred directed at artists and cultural events such as story-time in libraries. Threats and hatred targeting artists and cultural institutions are a serious threat to democracy.

10.2 Measures

- The Swedish Arts Grants Committee is tasked with communicating artists' exposure to threats, violence and harassment in relation to their professional practice. A report on the task will be presented by 20 February 2026 at the latest.



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