

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS

NATIONAL FIELDWORK REPORT

Country: Sweden

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1. INTRODUCTION

A note on the methodology

The writing of this report is part of the wider assignment to conduct a national mapping on all (for academic organisations) relevant laws, policies, public initiatives related to GBV taken by, and impacting on, a wide range of actors within the Swedish academia such as the Government Office, National authorities, HEIs, RFOs. It also included to map all initiatives taken by employer and employee organisations (umbrella organisations); all actions by NGOs; the policy and public debate around GBV in general and more specifically in relation to GBV in academia; policy and public debates and the impact they have had on the developments on GBV in academia and especially relating to the Istanbul convention and the #metoo movement in the last 5 years. The task also included addressing the impact of Covid-19 on the developments at large. The assignment furthermore includes making an annotated bibliography of all relevant research published in Swedish in the last 10 years, which is reported separately.

The time to conduct the whole mission was, in total: *5 days* (40 hours). This means that the annotated bibliography, the mapping made, and the report that follows provides an overview and an introduction. A lot more can be said about the situation in Sweden today and on the developments in the last 5-10 years in terms of both legal, policy, public and civil society initiatives and research than was possible to map in the short time of the assignment.

The assignment was designed to be conducted through desk research which was not entirely possible, and e-mail contacts have for some issues been made with the Equality Ombudsman, the Gender Equality Agency, several of the largest RFOs, the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR) and two experts on GBV in Sweden; Sofia Strid and Fredrik Bondestam.

General reflections

Sweden is generally considered a strong case in relation to gender equality policy more general and for policies on gender-based violence (GBV) more specifically. From a policy perspective, sexual harassment and harassment with relation to gender in workplaces (including an academic organization) and in relation to students have been regarded as aspects of discrimination and as such regulated through the Discrimination act and to some extent in the Work Environment Act (in addition to violations that are regulated in the penal code). The obligation to work preventive, examine risks and undertake measures have been regulated in law and included the obligation for the Education provider/Employer to collaborate with an employee and student representatives. Gender-based violence has been addressed in many different political initiatives, and “Men’s violence against women must stop” is one of the national overarching gender equality goals. In this regard, GBV and sexual harassment have been on the agenda in Swedish politics since at least the 1980s.



Still, women in Sweden are subjected to GBV, and existing studies show that women are heavily overrepresented in the statistics relating to fear of assault. In 2018, 1 744 cases were reported for gross violation of a woman's integrity (i.e. where the perpetrator was one with whom the woman had a close relationship). The reported cases of violence against women have furthermore increased in the last decades. Also, within work-life, women are overrepresented in instances GBV, and the reports that exist on sexual harassment in academia show that incidence up to about 26 per cent even though the numbers varies. The work with GBV in Sweden has been criticised in the GREVIO report following the evaluation, and in 2019 GREVIO provided 41 recommendations to Sweden on how to improve the work.

Recent years have seen growing awareness and debate around GBV in universities and research organisations. Government initiative to spur the work with gender mainstreaming (including the overarching goal to end men's violence against women) in Swedish academia (including state-run RFOs) and the #metoo movement (including specific accounts from academia), which coincided with the gender mainstreaming assignment, have likely influenced this development. The government have addressed GBV in academia specifically on several occasions, and there have been initiatives directed towards increasing the knowledge about and the preventive work on sexual harassment. One example is the report produced by the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR), at the request of the Government, on the work done by higher education institutions (HEIs) against sexual harassment. This report points to existing culture within academia as well as poor working conditions as drivers for the existing problems.

In general, few studies exist on the prevalence of GBV in Swedish academia on a national level and the majority of the studies available consist of smaller cross-sectional studies conducted before 2010. The more recent initiatives, mainly geared toward increasing the knowledge on the prevalence of GBV and preventive work, has focused foremost on sexual harassment concerning employees and students as the type of violence being addressed in academia even though there have been issues raised on instances of violence towards gender researchers and Human rights advocates within academia as well as the need to address violence in education provided by HEIs.

Since #metoo movement in 2017-2018, several initiatives have been taken by policy actors, RFOs and HEIs, to be further discussed below. The largest is the ongoing collaboration programme against sexual harassment and gender-based exposure initiated by the vice-chancellors at Karolinska Institutet (KI), KTH Royal Institute of Technology and Malmö University. All HEIs in Sweden have been invited to join, and engagement has proven to be high. In the programme, there is a broad understanding of GBV, including an intersectional perspective being applied.

2. MAPPING OF POLICIES AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Overall, the mapping shows that there are a number of policies and legal frameworks that are relevant for GBV in Swedish academia. The main responsibility for higher education and research rests with the Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) and the Government. They decide on regulations and allocate resources to the HEIs. Regulations that apply to the higher education sector are primarily the Higher Education Act (SFS 1992:1434) and the. Overall, the public-sector HEIs



have considerable autonomy in Sweden within an overall system of management by objectives. Within the framework of the legislation, HEIs take most of the decisions themselves, such as related to organisation; internal allocation of resources; educational offerings; educational content and design; how many students are admitted and what research they conduct. HEIs also have significant freedom in determining their staffing. The general legal framework addresses gender equality specifically as a task for HEIs. According to chapter 1, §5, second paragraph of the Higher Education Act (1992: 1434), equality between women and men should always be respected and promoted. Specific objectives concerning gender mainstreaming duties and in relation to promoting equal representation among professors are giving in the yearly regulations. There are also since 2018 a specific objective to include GBV in the education of certain professional groups.

Besides these more overarching objectives regulated in the legal frameworks of HEIs, several laws apply addresses more specifically the occurrence of GBV and especially concerning far-reaching duties for employers and education providers to take active measures in order to work preventive against GBV, which will be discussed next.

Swedish legislation on violence against women is integrated into the penal code. Additional legal provisions target the protection of particularly and support to victims of violence. There are a number of laws that are relevant in relation to gender-based violence in Sweden in general and that also applies to GBV in academia¹.

Furthermore, sexual harassment and harassment in relation to gender is banned in the Discrimination Act and also regulated in the Work Environment Act. The Discrimination Act aims to combat discrimination and to promote equal rights and opportunities in other ways. Under this act, sexual harassment is a form of discrimination. Harassment is defined as conduct that violates a person's dignity. To fall within the scope of the Discrimination Act, the offensive behaviour must be related to one or more of the grounds of discrimination². The Work Environment Act aims to prevent ill health and accidents at work and to achieve a good working environment. Sexual harassment can be a form of victimisation, which is regulated under this act.

Employers and Education providers are required to take active measures to prevent discrimination, including sexual harassment and harassment in relation to gender.³ For HEIs as

¹ **The National Centre for knowledge on men's violence on women (NCK) mentions 13 laws of relevance.**

² **According to the Equality Ombudsmans description, harassment may be the expression of ridicule or degrading generalisations that have a connection to the grounds of discrimination. Harassment may also be of a sexual nature. Besides comments and words, this could involve unwanted touching or leering. It could also be a question of unwelcome compliments, invitations or insinuations. Harassment and sexual harassment are behaviours that are unwelcome. It is the victim of harassment who decides what is unwelcome or offensive. According to the law, the perpetrator must understand how the behaviour is perceived for it to be classified as harassment or sexual harassment. It is thus important that the victim makes it clear to the perpetrator that the behaviour is unpleasant and unwelcome. In certain circumstances, the offensive nature of the behaviour may be so obvious that no comment is required from the victim.**

³ **The obligation concerns all grounds covered by the Discrimination Act: gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age.**



an employer, the Discrimination Act and also the Work Environment Act directs the work. Under the Discrimination Act, an employer must work continuously in four steps to prevent sexual harassment and harassment in relation to gender.⁴; investigate; analyse; take measures, and monitor and evaluate. There must be clear guidelines; according to the Equality Ombudsman, this entails that everyone in the workplace must be aware that the employer finds sexual harassment unacceptable. This applies to those who are already employees, as well as to substitutes, interns, temps and new recruits. Such information must be available in written guidelines and can be integrated into operations in various ways. For example, the guidelines and what they entail can be addressed in private conversations or via the intranet. The employer also needs to monitor and follow up the guidelines, including making sure that everyone has received the information. This can be done through, for example, employee surveys and performance appraisals. Both the Discrimination Act and the Work Environment Authority's regulations require that everyone has access to clear procedures for the prevention and handling of sexual harassment and victimisation should such situations arise in the workplace. The procedures shall state:

- to whom the victim is to turn to get help quickly
- what the employer must do when they receive information that sexual harassment is happening in the workplace
- what the employer does with this information
- who in the workplace is responsible for investigating incidents or allegations.

Both guidelines and procedures must be available in writing. According to the Equality Ombudsman, in order for guidelines and procedures to be efficient, it is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that these procedures exist, knows what they entail and understands what everyone has to do.

According to the Discrimination Acts, HEIs must also have guidelines and routines in their operations to prevent harassment and sexual harassment of students.⁵ In addition, HEIs must follow up and evaluate the guidelines and routines that exist. The education provider must have guidelines that indicate that sexual harassment and harassment related to any of the seven grounds of discrimination are not accepted. There must also be routines that clarify how the university should act if someone is subjected to harassment. The routines must state whom the person who considers themselves harassed should turn to and who is responsible for the incident or allegations being investigated. Managers and staff in senior management positions should be trained on the rules on harassment and on how to prevent and deter harassment. Each university must examine its own activities to discover whether there are risks of discrimination or retaliation or other obstacles to equal rights and opportunities. The survey may show that more measures are needed than developing guidelines and routines. The work with guidelines and routines must be done, regardless of whether the investigation of the activity

⁴ Besides the work on sexual harassment and harassment on all grounds of discrimination, the employer must also continuously apply a four-step approach (investigate, analyse, take measures and monitor/evaluate) within the following five areas: working conditions; provisions and practices regarding pay and other terms of employment; recruitment and promotion; education and training, and other skills development; possibilities to reconcile gainful employment and parenthood; promote gender balance in different types of work – including in management positions and carry out annual pay surveys.

⁵ Besides the duties to work with active measures on sexual harassment and harassment on all grounds of discrimination, HEIs must also work to prevent discrimination and promote equal opportunities within the following areas: recruitment and recruitment process; teaching methods and organization of education; examinations and assessments of students' performance; study environment, and opportunities to combine studies with parenthood.



shows that there is any risk of any sexual harassment or harassment that is related to any of the grounds for discrimination.

An Investigation of the compliance with the Discrimination Act concerning the duties to work with Active measures at Swedish HEIs is currently conducted by the Equality Ombudsman 2019-2021. This is an initiative that seeks to determine compliance with the Discrimination Act concerning the duties to work with Active measures at Swedish HEIs. The duty includes the obligation HEIs to work with prevention and promotion measures aimed at preventing discrimination and serving in other ways to promote equal rights and opportunities, as discussed above. It includes work to prevent sexual harassment and harassment with relation to gender. The overall results have not yet been communicated, even though there are individual reports from some HEIs being published.

Besides the Discrimination Act discussed above, the Swedish government in 2016 launched Gender Mainstreaming in Academia (GMA), an initiative mandating that all Swedish state-funded higher education institutions must focus on gender mainstreaming. The initiative was first set to 2016-2019 and have then continued. The GMA requires HEIs to make gender mainstreaming plans that describe how the universities will implement the assignment and announce their achievements in their regular yearly reports to the Government. Gender mainstreaming has been the main political strategy in Sweden since the mid-1990s to implement the national gender equality objectives, one objective being “Men’s violence against women must stop”.⁶

The Gender Equality Agency in Sweden (a state authority) has the task to support HEIs in the implementation of gender mainstreaming. The task to support HEIs was moved to the Gender Equality Agency when it was first started from the Gender Secretariat at Gothenburg University. The Gender secretariat has produced guidelines for implementing the mission that is still in use by the Gender Equality Agency. In this guideline, the implementation of measures to prevent sexual harassment, bullying and violence is highlighted as an important part of the assignment.

The Gender Equality Agency has, besides supporting the HEIs more generally, recently worked with an education initiative (S2018/01831/JÄM) directed towards the integration of GBV into education which relates to the new government objective in the Higher Education Ordinance (SFS 1993:100). The agency has, on behalf of the Government and in collaboration with five higher education institutions, offered educational initiatives and knowledge support to 27 higher

⁶ **The overarching goal of the gender equality policy is that women and men are to have the same power to shape society and their own lives. To this end, six sub-goals have been specified: Gender equal division of power and influence. Women and men are to have the same rights and opportunities to be active citizens and to shape the conditions for decision-making; Economic gender equality. Women and men must have the same opportunities and conditions as regards paid work, which give economic independence throughout life; Gender equal education. Women and men, girls and boys, must have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to education, study options and personal development; Gender equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care. Women and men must have the same responsibility for housework and have the opportunity to give and receive care on equal terms; Gender equal health. Women and men, girls and boys, must have the same conditions for good health and be offered care on equal terms, and Men's violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys, must have the same right and access to physical integrity.**

education institutions and 84 educational programs. In the agency's reports on the assignment, it is concluded that there is a great need for teachers and staff with overall educational responsibility to further their education on GBV.

The Gender Equality Agency is also collaborating with the ongoing national research programme on GBV in academia and is also planning to reinforce its efforts to work with GBV within the gender mainstreaming assignment. According to the last report on GMA (in 2020), preventing and combating men's violence against women has been increasingly prioritized by HEIs since the #metoo call. According to a survey made by the agency, about a third of higher education institutions prioritize initiatives linked to this sub-goal after 2017. Efforts to strengthen knowledge about sexual harassment and violence among students and staff, as well as changed routines regarding sexual harassment and discrimination, have been prioritized. Several higher education institutions now collaborate on issues of sexual harassment, for example, through the ongoing national research programme.

Besides the policies and legal frameworks mentioned above, there have also been several other developments in the last five years. One is the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR) that in 2018 received an assignment from the Swedish government – to report on the efforts of Sweden's higher education institutions to prevent sexual harassment, as well as what they do when they are made aware of suspected sexual harassment, and to present good examples of this work. They also organised "#metoo - a workshop on sexual harassment in the higher education sector" in 2018.

In Sweden, some of the RFOs have been active in implementing gender mainstreaming more generally (especially the state-funded ones due to Governmental gender mainstreaming assignments), and there have also been initiatives to develop the work to address GBV. This has been done in several ways, including raising awareness and support work on GBV within academic organisations and also in funding research on GBV in academia. None of the larger RFOs addressed in this mapping has, however, answered that they have any specific measures on GBV in relation to applicants and application processes.

The issue of GBV in academia has also been discussed by employer and employee organisations (umbrella organisations). One example is in the collaboration during the "dialogue days". The dialogue days are an initiative from Karolinska Institutet, KTH and Malmö University and the dialogue days are arranged together with the National Secretariat for Gender Research, UHR and SUHF. SUHF has organised six events/discussions on the topic.

1. HEIs rectors and the minister of higher education and research met in December 2017 to talk about if the university leadership would need political support in order to forcefully work against GH, SH and SA.
2. A Metoo# conference was organized in May 2018. HEI from the whole country participated. It was focused on sharing knowledge about GBV and experience of the work at the institutions.
3. Rectors were meeting in August 2018 when two new initiatives from the institutions were discussed.
4. A conference in November 2018 with university leaders and HR managers.
5. A launching seminar of a national prevalence study in March 2019 (three HEIs took the initiative to the study).

6. A workshop in June 2019 discussing the first phases of the national prevalence study and possible other studies.

Apart from these events, the subject has been discussed in the board of SUHF and the standing committee on employer issues.

As mentioned before, the Research and Collaboration Programme started in 2019 by Karolinska Institutet (KI), KTH Royal Institute of Technology and Malmö University has been an important development. The programme aims to create a common platform for the work against sexual harassment and gender-based violence in academia. The programme will include the following activities: A national study of prevalence, causes and consequences of sexual harassment and gender-based violence and victimization in the entire Swedish higher education sector; development of new research-based knowledge of sexual harassment and gender-based violence and victimization in various contexts of the academy: at the individual, organizational and sectoral level that can serve as support in development work and common platforms, arenas and networks for both research collaborations and opportunities for joint improvement work. The first task of the programme will be to identify sexual harassment and gender-based violence, and victimization at a cross-sectoral level through a national study. The study will identify occurrence, causes and consequences and from an intersectional perspective. The study will include 125 000 respondents (students, doctoral students and staff) active at 38 higher educational institutions in Sweden. Based on the results of the study and existing research, the higher education institutions, both individually and jointly, will be able to initiate various research and development projects. The various arenas for collaboration provide a frame for this work.

My assessment of the extent to which the national and/or regional policies have an impact on the organisational level in the country is that they have indeed had an impact but that there is a need for further evaluations and research to determine the extent of the impact and what factors that have affected the implementation. In general, there is a lack of studies of the implementation of gender equality objectives and policies within Swedish academic organisations, which includes objectives and policies on GBV.

3. DEBATES REGARDING #METOO AND THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION

Especially the #MeToo movement has had a large impact on the awareness of sexual harassment in universities and research organisations in Sweden. A specific call in 2017 was made in relation to academia under the name #akademiuppropet (“call for academia”). In a few weeks, it gathered 2 400 signatures, and the corresponding Facebook group got over 9000 members in a short time. Stories were collected from all over Sweden and from different subjects and faculties. #akademiuppropet was published in national media, where several of the stories were shared. The stories gathered in #akademiuppropet have not pointed out individual perpetrators, such as in some instances of the #metoo movement. This seems to be a general feature in Swedish #metoo according to ongoing research, and the intention has been to highlight a general tendency rather than exposing individual perpetrators. #akademiuppropet was commented on by the Minister for Higher Education and Research, and several seminars, debates and other events were organized in relation to the initiative.



Also, the Istanbul Convention has been a topic in the debate and affected academia in various ways. One of all measures to comply with the Istanbul Convention's requirements for education was in 2018 to amend the Higher Education Ordinance for eight programs for professions where the professional may face both those who are exposed to violence and those who use violence. The first students, at the 27 higher education institutions and 84 programs affected by the degree objective of demonstrating knowledge about men's violence against women and violence in close relationships, will take their degree in 2021–2024.

The GREVIO report 2019 on the Swedish implementation of the Istanbul convention makes a total of 41 recommendations to Sweden. A number of these recommendations are particularly strong, i.e. according to GREVIO, Sweden should immediately remedy certain shortcomings. Sweden has also made explanatory comments on GREVIO's report, which was published separately on the Council of Europe's website. By January 2022, the Government is expected to report on how the Council of Europe's recommendations on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention have been handled in Sweden.

4. PUBLIC OPINION ON GBV

The Gender Equality Agency is currently conducting a large scale survey on attitudes towards gender equality and violence in general. The survey is conducted by Statistics Sweden through a paper survey with the possibility of submitting answers via an online survey. The survey is aimed at a random sample of 20,000 registered people in Sweden who are 16 years and older. The overall purpose of the survey is to examine attitudes to gender equality and violence in general. An important aspect is to increase knowledge about the issues in order to be able to analyze the implementation and effects of gender equality policy.

5. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON DISCUSSIONS ABOUT GBV

In general, there has been a discussion about the impact on Covid-19 for GBV and especially the need to understand the impact of the pandemic better. There have not been any specific national initiatives taken in relation to Covid-19 and GBV in universities and research organisations, to my knowledge. The Research and Collaboration Programme on Gender-based Violence (KI, KTH, Malmö University and the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research) has announced that the prevalence study has been delayed due to the pandemic and will start early May 2021.

6. CONCLUSION

As described initially, this report and the mapping that it relies on is not very extensive, given the short time it was made in, and the conclusions should therefore be seen as more reflexive than based on elaborated research evidence. Nevertheless, given the examinations, the expert's opinions provided and also the authors earlier knowledge, it appears that all areas of the 7P model exists in Sweden but also that it can be further developed in order to be more efficient.

Especially the lack of prevalence studies is apparent. Also, collaborations between actors both locally and nationally could be established more sustainably and long term. At the same time, it seems that the issue of GBV in academia has gained increased attention in the last five years, spurred by the GMA mission and the #metoo movement.

It might seem odd that Sweden, being a champion in gender equality, is experiencing problems with GBV similar to many other European countries. Earlier research has pointed to more general problems relating to the implementation of gender mainstreaming in academia, including major organisational shortcomings and a general lack of awareness of existing gender inequalities. Research on the #metoo movement has pointed to a culture of silence regarding issues of sexual harassment visible in many organisational cultures, including academia. In relation to GBV in academia, the general policy “split” in relation to more liberal anti-discrimination approaches targeting academia as a workplace and place for studies visavi the more structural approaches of the national gender equality politics have been of importance and were furthermore the autonomy of academic organisations in Sweden also have likely played a role. GBV within the framework of national policies and resources in relation to the national policy objective to end men's violence against women has probably more often included a wider range of actors such as civil society organisations, and the effects of GBV has likely been more visible in the national public debate, media coverage etc. This split in terms of responsibilities and actors being involved, together with the emphasis on the local responsibilities and autonomy of HEIs, might have rendered GBV in academia historically as a somewhat more invisible area in the larger domain of GBV politics in Sweden.

The far-reaching duties for HEIs in relation to the Discrimination Act (i.e. not only specifically on sexual harassment but also in relation to: working conditions; provisions and practices regarding pay and other terms of employment; recruitment and promotion; education and training, and other skills development; possibilities to reconcile gainful employment and parenthood; promote gender balance in different types of work – including in management positions and carry out annual pay surveys), relates to factors raised as important for occurrences of GBV. Together with the continued GMA mission, these two policy measures could, at least in theory, pose powerful drivers for change. It remains unclear, however, how they are implemented in practice and more research on policy implementation, what effects are generated from policy and why is urgently needed in order to better understand the need for policy (re)design.



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The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF). The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions was founded in 1995 as an organisation for institutional cooperation on a voluntary basis. 38 universities and university colleges in Sweden are members (16 universities, 18 university colleges and 4 university art colleges). Webpage: <https://suhf.se/in-english/>

The National Centre for knowledge on men's violence on women (NCK). The National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence Against Women (NCK) is a knowledge and resource centre based at Uppsala University. NCK has been commissioned by the Government to increase the knowledge of men's violence against women in Sweden, and to develop methods for the treatment and care of women subjected to violence. Webpage: <https://nck.uu.se/en/?languageld=1>



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