

Sweden's report on
measures to prevent
poverty and
social exclusion



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Sweden's report on measures to prevent poverty and social exclusion 2005

The EU's member states have been cooperating on efforts to prevent poverty and social exclusion since 2000. This cooperation is pursued in accordance with the open method of coordination. The member states have drafted two national action plans – in 2001 and 2003 – in which they presented their priorities for contributing to achievement of the objectives in this area that were agreed by the Nice European Council. These objectives are:

1. promoting participation in employment and access by all to resources, goods, services and rights
2. preventing the risks of exclusion
3. helping the most vulnerable
4. mobilizing all relevant bodies.

In the 2003 action plan Sweden reported, among other things, on trends and challenges, the strategic approach and political measures scheduled up to 2005. The recurring theme was the need for closer cooperation and partnerships at all levels of society and a more explicit user perspective.

The member states have been preparing implementation and update reports on measures to combat poverty and social exclusion during the spring of 2005. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs was responsible for

coordination of the Swedish report. All the ministries concerned have taken part in this work. Statistics Sweden contributed data for the common EU indicators (the “Laeken indicators”). Consultations have taken place on a continuous basis with the Network Against Social Exclusion, which includes a very large number of organizations in the field of social policy, as well as other organizations. The ministry has also presented information to the Committee on Social Insurance. The structure and length of the report conform to the guidelines adopted by the EU Social Protection Committee. Chapter 1 describes social and economic developments since the previous action plan was submitted and chapter 2 contains a description and evaluation of goals and the extent to which they have been achieved. Chapter 3, which represents the main body of the report, describes the implemented measures. Chapter 4 contains examples of good practice prepared in cooperation with the Network Against Social Exclusion. Most of the measures described in chapter 5, Updates for 2005-2006, are derived from the 2005 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill.

Stockholm, June 2005

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1. Main trends and developments

The economy is growing, but there is little improvement in the labour market

The years 1998-2000 were a period of strong economic growth in Sweden. The downturn in 2001 and the subsequent slackness was followed by a recovery. The government expects the Swedish economy to grow by 3.2 per cent in 2005. Households are expected to increase their consumption thanks to an increase in real income, low interest rates and falling unemployment. Public consumption is expected to rise in 2005 and 2006.

Open unemployment, which in 2001 and 2002 had dropped to 4 per cent, totalled 5.5 per cent (men 5.9 per cent, women 5.1 per cent) in 2004. As with previous upturns, the labour market has been slow to react. Despite healthy growth in 2004 the labour market trend was downward for the third year in succession, and the number of people in work dropped while unemployment increased. The government expects that the number of people in work will increase by over 30,000 in 2005 and more than 40,000 in 2006 and that open unemployment will fall to 5 per cent in 2005 and 4 per cent during the second half of 2006.

The labour market is still very much gender-segregat-

ed. Women's earnings are just over 80 per cent of men's. This difference is smaller when age, educational level, sector, working hours and professions are taken into account, but women's earnings are still only 92 per cent of men's. Many women also work part-time against their will and spend more time than men on unpaid work.

Sweden is one of the countries in Europe with the largest proportion of inhabitants who were born in another country. The asset that such ethnic diversity represents is not put to good use, however, which is partly due to structural obstacles to the entry of immigrant women and men to the regular labour market. The average employment rate among persons born outside Sweden is 57 per cent for women and 62 per cent for men. If the employment rate in this group was the same as for other Swedes, the number of people in work would increase by about 115,000.

The need of financial assistance is diminishing, but slowly

The proportion of the population that is dependent on financial assistance from the social services to maintain themselves is one of several measures of economic vul-

Employment rate as a percentage of the population aged 16-64					
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Women	72.2	73.5	73.4	72.8	71.8
Men	76.1	77.0	76.3	75.6	75.0
Total	74.2	75.3	74.9	74.3	73.4

Relative unemployment among the population aged 16-64					
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Women	4.3	3.6	3.6	4.4	5.1
Men	5.0	4.3	4.4	5.3	5.9
Total	4.7	4.0	4.0	4.9	5.5

Source: Statistics Sweden

nerability. The number of people who receive financial assistance has dropped since 1995, although at a slightly slower rate in 2003 compared with 2002. Almost 6 per cent of the population, or 418,000 *persons*, received financial assistance in 2003, which was slightly less (16,000) than in 2002. 229,000 *households* received financial assistance at some time in 2003, which was slightly less the year before (237,000 households). Most recipients receive assistance for a short period, which is in line with the principle that financial assistance represents the ultimate safety net for people who temporarily find it difficult to support themselves. Recipient households received assistance for an average period of 5.6 months in 2003, which was slightly shorter than in 2002. However, some people remain dependent on social assistance for a long time. Households that had received assistance for at least two years accounted for 4 per cent of all recipient households in 2003 – the lowest figure since 1992. The dominant age group among long-term recipients was 20-24. One reason for this is that people in this age group have not yet worked long enough to qualify for benefits from the universal insurance system.

This also applies to the foreign-born population. During the 1990s, the financial assistance system increasingly became a subsistence system for people born outside Sweden who had not yet entered the labour market. Persons who have not qualified for social and unemployment benefits often find it difficult to support themselves in the event of sickness or unemployment. 2 per cent of the Swedish-born population over the age of 18 receive financial assistance compared with 11 per cent of the foreign-born population. Two-thirds of households aged 18-64 that received assistance for more than 10 months were born outside Sweden. The financial assistance paid out in 2003 totalled SEK 8,274 million, which is a decrease of just under 5 per cent in real terms since 2002.

According to the report *Economically Vulnerable Children*, which was prepared by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, about 147,000 children lived in families that received financial assistance at least once during the year 2002, which corresponds to 7 per cent of all children. 235,000 children lived in families with a disposable income of under 60 per cent of median income. This corresponds to 12 per cent of all children up to the age of 17.

Life expectancy is increasing and public health is improving

Life expectancy continues to increase. Life expectancy for a newborn boy in 2003 was 77.9 years and for a girl 82.4 years. This means that life expectancy has increased by three years for men and two years for women since 1990. Infant mortality has been halved in the last 20 years. The figure for 2004 was 3.1 children out of 1,000 live births.

The risk of contracting coronary disease, which is the group of diseases that causes the largest number of premature deaths, has decreased by about 23 per cent since 1987, and the risk of dying of such disease has decreased even more. Cancerous diseases are increasing at a slower rate than previously and mortality caused by these diseases is decreasing too. Pain of various kinds has become more widespread, especially among women. Diabetes is on the increase among children, but not among adults. Overweight is increasing in all age and socioeconomic groups, especially among young adults. Child obesity is a serious health problem. The incidence of obesity among children aged 10-16 more than doubled between 1987 and 2001. The proportion of obese people has increased more among low-skilled than among skilled people.

The percentage of the population that suffers from alarm, worry and anxiety has increased since 1990. In 2003 25 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men

reported such problems. The number of deaths by suicide fell by one third among both men and women between 1987 and 2002. Although children in Sweden enjoy very good health by international standards, psychosomatic symptoms have increased continuously among school pupils since the mid-1980s.

Despite the increase in prosperity for the majority of the population, there are still great differences in terms of health among all age groups irrespective of sex. Mortality is greater among those who have only attended compulsory school than among those with higher education. The same is true in terms of self-defined health status. The male death rate is higher than that for females in all age groups irrespective of the cause of death.

... but sickness rates are still high

After several years of rapidly increasing sickness rates the trend was reversed in 2003. Since then sick leave rates have fallen, albeit from a high level. The ill-health index¹ has fallen by 1.0 day since the peak rate in October 2003, which corresponds to 5.7 million fewer days of compensation paid out of the social insurance system. About 170,000 women and 98,000 men received sick pay in March 2005, which is a decrease of 11 per cent compared with the same period the previous year. The number of persons who received sickness benefit and activity support for the first time dropped slightly from 75,000 in 2004 to 73,300 during the 12-month period up to April 2005. In April 2005, about 324,000 women and 222,000 men received sickness benefit and activity support.

Housing shortages in an increasing number of municipalities and obstacles to helping the homeless. About one-third of the municipalities in Sweden report a shortage of housing, and the percentage is rising. There is a shortage, in particular, of small and medium-sized rented apartments. About one municipality in four reports that there is a shortage of special accommodation for disabled persons and that this shortage is likely to persist. The housing situation is especially precarious for people who have been evicted on account of rent arrears or disruptive behaviour or a record of payment default. One municipality in four reports that it needs more housing for people who do not meet the requirements for a lease of their own in the regular housing market. More than one out of three municipalities reports that it is difficult to find such housing.

Fewer young people are experimenting with drugs, alcohol consumption among adults is increasing. Alcohol consumption has increased for several years. Total alcohol consumption, including both registered and unregistered consumption², was estimated to be 10.8 litres of pure alcohol per person³ in 2004, which was an increase of almost 2 litres per person since 2000. Unregistered alcohol accounted for almost one-third of total consumption, which also represents an increase since 2000. Despite the sharp increase in consumption, alcohol-related deaths remained unchanged at about 2,000 per year, four-fifths of the victims being males. The percentage of pupils in the last year of 9-year compulsory school who state they never drink alcohol has increased from 19 per cent among boys and 18 per cent

¹ The ill-health index is a measure of all sick leave days for which compensation is paid out of social insurance funds.

² Unregistered alcohol consists of alcoholic beverages imported or smuggled by travellers, illicitly distilled and home-brewed alcohol and alcohol consumed while abroad. Registered consumption consists of alcohol sold by the Swedish Alcohol Retailing Monopoly, restaurants, breweries and the food sector.

³ Over the age of 15.

among girls in 2000 to 29 per cent among boys and 26 per cent among girls in 2004. Experience of drugs among these pupils fell from 10 per cent among boys and 8 per cent among girls in 2000 to 7 per cent among both boys and girls in 2004. The number of heavy drug⁴ misusers is estimated to have increased from about 28,000 in 1998 to about 30,000 today. Drug-related mortality has been around 400 in recent years, which is a sharp increase since the mid-1990s.

The crime trend is broadly constant. More than 50 per cent of reported crimes occur in the three metropolitan areas, where about one-third of the population lives. The number of reported crimes has been broadly constant since the early 1990s, with slight increases and decreases in certain years. Reported crime has risen by 8 per cent since 1995. Over 1,200,000 crimes were reported in 2004, over half of which were theft crimes of various kinds. Most crime suspects are men. Women represented 20 per cent of suspects in 2003. The number of prosecuted persons fell slightly from 124,000 in 1997 to 114,000 in 2003. Physical abuse crimes increased by 10 per cent between 2001 and 2003. The level of lethal violence has remained virtually unchanged during the last 30 years. About 100 people die as a result of violence every year. The figures for 2002 were 66 men and 37 women.

More reports of violence against women and children

About 22,000 offences classified as physical abuse of women, three-quarters of which were perpetrated by a person known to the victim, were reported in 2003. Overall, reported physical abuse of women has increased by about 20 per cent in the last 10 years. At the same

time, there has been a very sharp increase in reported physical abuse of children. Almost 1,200 offences against children aged 0-6 and 6,400 offences against children aged 7-14 were reported in 2003. This represents an increase of 40 per cent for the younger age group and 80 per cent for the older. The increase in reported physical abuse of women is probably due both to increased willingness to report crime and to an actual increase in violence, while the increase in violence against children is mainly attributable to increased willingness to report.

Uncertainty about the trend in prostitution

Under the Prohibition of Purchases of Sexual Services Act such services were banned in 1998. The National Board of Health and Welfare has carried out two surveys of the extent of prostitution since the Act entered into force. These surveys were based on reports about prostitution given by people who come into contact with prostitutes in their work. In the more recent of these surveys, which was carried out in 2003, it was concluded that street prostitution had decreased since the entry into force of the Prohibition of Purchases of Sexual Services Act. No significant changes were reported since the first survey in 1999. It is difficult to say anything definite about indoor prostitution. The police and other informants state that prostitution occurs in places like restaurants, conferences and solarium and massage parlours. The Internet is another arena where men and women offer sexual services for a fee, but it is difficult to estimate the extent of these transactions. The Internet also offers young people access to websites with pornographic and other offensive content, contact advertisements and e-mail addresses to people who may abuse them.

⁴ Misuse is defined as heavy if a person has injected drugs any time during the past 12 months or used drugs daily or almost daily during the last 12 months, irrespective of the method of intake

2. General evaluation of progress on goals and priorities

A key objective mentioned in the 2003 Swedish national action plan was the aim of substantially reducing, by 2010, the number of people at risk of social and economic vulnerability. This is to be achieved, in all cases irrespective of ethnic background, by reducing the proportion of women and men whose income is lower than the basic social assistance allowance and the proportion of those whose income is under 60 per cent of the median income. The proportion of people in families with children whose income is under 60 per cent of the median income and the proportion of girls and boys who leave compulsory school with incomplete grades is also to be reduced, while the proportion of women and men who satisfy the requirements for general eligibility for admission to higher education and employment among both women and men is to be increased. The proportion of girls and boys who have experimented with drugs, use alcohol or smoke is to be reduced, the number of women and men with substance abuse problems who undergo treatment is to increase and homelessness⁵ is to be reduced among both women and men. The progress made so far is described below.

The integration goals must be mainstreamed into all activities in this area. One of these goals is *equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all irrespective of ethnic and cultural background*. However, as a matter of principle no statistics are kept with reference to ethnicity. Progress on integration goals is therefore monitored by means of statistics relating to “persons born outside

Sweden” or persons “who were born in another country”. Such statistics are not yet available for all the indicators included in the action plan. For this reason the statistical data below only include these parameters in certain cases. Persons with a “Swedish background” are individuals born in Sweden with at least one parent born here and persons with a “foreign background” are individuals born outside Sweden and individuals born in Sweden both of whose parents were born outside Sweden. The government has adopted a number of integration goals for 2005 in various policy areas and will adopt more such goals later.

Other goals

In 1998 the Government set a target to increase the proportion of the population that is in regular work to 80 per cent in 2004. The target has not been achieved despite favourable developments in other respects. The regular employment rate for the age group 20-64 was 77 per cent in 2004. The government stated in the 2005 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill that the long-term objective is full employment and that the interim target is to reduce unemployment to 4 per cent and raise the regular employment rate to 80 per cent.

The target for social justice set in the 2001 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill was to reduce dependence on social assistance, calculated in full-year equivalents, by half, i.e. from 115,200 to 57,600, by 2004. The number of persons in need of social assistance in 2003 was 85,000 in

⁵ The definition “homeless” covers persons who do not have or rent an apartment of their own, are not long-term lodgers and do not sub-rent an apartment, who rely on temporary accommodation alternatives or are rough sleepers. In a national survey 1998 homelessness was estimated to 8 400 persons. The survey will be followed up in a new national survey in 2005. National surveys will subsequently be carried out every two years.

terms of full-year equivalents. The government acknowledged in the 2005 Budget Bill that the goal had not been achieved in 2004 but declared that it was still valid and would be achieved as soon as possible, primarily by increasing employment among persons born outside Sweden and other groups with a low employment rate. The 2003 national action plan also mentioned that the government had set the goal of halving sick leave rates by 2008 while reducing grants of sickness benefit and activity support. This will mean reducing the 12-month value at July 2008 to under 46 million days. The government considers that this target is within reach.

Number of women and men with an income under the social assistance threshold ⁶		
	2000	2003
<i>Women</i>		
Single with children	46 311	38 826
Single without children	58 682	56 373
<i>Men</i>		
Single with children	5 322	5 240
Single without children	96 519	86 954
<i>Married/cohabiting</i>		
With children	37 469	27 283
Without children	13 910	13 399

Percentage of women and men with an income under 60 per cent of median income		
	2001	2003
Women	11.25	11
Men	8.97	10

Percentage of people in families with children with an income under 60 per cent of median income		
	2001	2003 ⁷
Single, at least one child	13.50	
Two adults with one child	4.34	
Two adults with two children	4.83	
Two adults, at least three children	10.57	
Other households with children	8.03	
Households with children		10

Percentage of girls and boys who after leaving compulsory school meet the requirements for admission to a national programme at upper secondary school		
	1998/99	2002/2003
<i>Born in Sweden</i>		
Girls	93.3	92.3
Boys	90.2	90.2
<i>Born outside Sweden</i>		
Girls	81.7	80.1
Boys	76.7	77.4

⁶ The number of households/persons that have received social assistance the full year.

⁷ Owing to the use of different calculation bases it is impossible to compare different categories of households with children in 2001 and 2003.

Percentage of 20-year-old women and men with general eligibility for higher education

	2001	2003
Women	65	65 %
Men	5	56 %

Percentage of employment, women and men⁸

	2000 ⁹	2004
<i>Born in Sweden</i>		
Women	74.6	74.1
Men	78.1	76.7
Total	76.4	75.4
<i>Born outside Sweden</i>		
Women	56.1	55.9
Men	63.0	60.9
Total	59.5	58.3

Percentage of girls and boys who have tried drugs, use alcohol or smoke¹⁰

	2000	2004
<i>Smoke</i>		
Girls	36	30
Boys	30	18
<i>Have tried drugs</i>		
Girls	8	7
Boys	10	7
<i>Use alcohol</i>		
Girls	82	74
Boys	81	71

Number of women and men with substance abuse problems who are in treatment¹¹

	1999	2003
Women	5 445	5 841
Men	14 193	15 261

⁸ Employment rate in the age group 16-64.

⁹ Swedish-born people in 2000 are people who have been Swedish citizens since birth.

¹⁰ The data relate to pupils in the last year of 9-year compulsory school.

¹¹ The data relate to people undergoing treatment on 1 November 1999 and 2003, respectively.

3. Implementation of measures and institutional arrangements

The 2003 action plan reported a number of measures that the Government had undertaken to implement by 2005 in accordance with various decisions, particularly in connection with the annual budget process. The progress made on implementation is reported below. Progress on measures adopted later than 2003 is also reported. As in the earlier action plans, the report only covers measures for which the Government is directly responsible, for example in connection with the budget and legislation. This means that measures carried out at the local and regional levels for which local authorities are responsible – and which are crucial to the welfare of many individuals – are not mentioned in this report.

Equality between women and men is a horizontal goal

Women and men should have the same rights, obligations and opportunities in all matters of any significance. Nowadays women and men do have the same rights, but we have still not achieved an equal society. However, significant progress has been made towards strengthening the position of women in society. In the Government's national action plan for gender equality up to 2006 the following five focus areas are highlighted:

- representation; equal sharing of power and influence,
- equal pay for equal work and work of equal value,
- men's violence against women; prostitution and trafficking in women for sexual purposes,
- men and gender equality,
- sexualization of the public sphere.

Equal rights and the equal dignity of all human beings

Society must be shaped in accordance with the principle of the equal dignity of all human beings. Everyone who lives in Sweden has the same rights, obligations and opportunities irrespective of ethnic origin, sex, ethnic affiliation, religion or other beliefs, sexual orientation or disabilities. The direction and formulation of all policies must be based on this principle.

The goals and approaches adopted in the context of integration policy are to be applied in all social sectors. The aim of integration policy is to help people so that they can support themselves and play their part in society, to defend basic democratic values, to promote equal rights and opportunities for women and men and to combat racism, xenophobia and ethnic discrimination. The Government has in recent years taken various measures to improve the outcomes of integration policy.

Like everyone else, girls, boys, women and men with disabilities want to control their own lives. Various reforms aimed at strengthening the protection of the individual have improved the position of disabled persons in society. The national objectives of disability policy are to achieve a community based on diversity, to shape society in such a way as to enable disabled persons of all ages to participate fully in community life and to achieve equal conditions for girls, boys, women and men with disabilities. The Government aims to mainstream a disability perspective into all sectors, create an accessible society and improve the treatment of disabled people.

Another horizontal objective is to ensure that young

people are respected and given opportunities to develop, live in safety and participate and have a say in society. The rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child must be mainstreamed into all policy areas and have an impact at all levels of society and in all activities that concern young people.

3.1. Promoting employment

An inclusive labour market¹²

Compared with the other EU member states labour force participation is high in Sweden, particularly among women and the elderly. But the participation of immigrants, young people and the elderly is below average. These three groups are therefore important target groups when it comes to increasing the total labour supply, at the same time as people on long-term sick leave and recipients of sickness benefit should be given more opportunities to return to the labour market. The Government's strategy for increasing the labour supply is to uphold the primacy of work principle as a general principle of growth policy. Several policy areas are involved in this connection. There is a need for measures to increase the throughput rate and quality in education, to improve the integration of immigrants into the labour market, to reduce the length of unemployment episodes, to enable the elderly to work longer, to enable disabled persons to get and retain jobs and to reduce sick leave rates and new grants of sickness benefit and activity support.

Labour market policy

Labour market programmes play a key role in ensuring that individuals are not excluded from the labour market because their skills do not meet the requirements of

the knowledge society. Under the Activity Guarantee, which was introduced nationwide in 2000, people who have been excluded from the labour market on a full-time basis are given the extra support they need to get a new job or start studying. Apart from the unemployed, part-time workers who wish to increase their working hours are eligible for the guarantee. The results for February 2005 show that 45 per cent of those who have been enrolled in the Activity Guarantee are still enrolled after six months or more. We will only be able to present proposals for measures to improve long-term unemployed persons' prospects of finding work when we know more about the nature of the obstacles to returning to the labour market. A commission of inquiry has therefore been appointed to investigate the possibility of improving the Activity Guarantee. The results will be presented by 31 August 2005. The further increases in the ceiling for the Recruitment Incentive that were made in 2003 and 2004 were a response to the increase in the length of participation in the Activity Guarantee and the need to improve the incentives for employers to hire persons with a very tenuous attachment to the labour market.

Enhancing employability

Lifelong learning is supported by measures in several policy areas and several levels. It is crucial to achievement of the goals of full employment, better work quality and productivity and social cohesion. The flexibility of the education system provides plenty of opportunity for supplementing qualifications to meet the needs of the labour market and the individual. Extensive measures are being taken to reduce the number of premature school leavers and to improve the opportunities for education for low-skilled workers and people who have no work experience.

¹² See also Sweden's 2004 action plan for employment.

Overcoming obstacles to employment

Effective job matching is essential to a properly functioning labour market. It is the task of the employment services to provide information about job-seekers and to assign them to vacant jobs. The government's labour market and education policies provide a platform to support women and men who encounter special difficulties in the labour market, or are likely to do so. The effectiveness of labour market programmes is being continuously improved so that they will achieve the Government's targets. It is especially important to find solutions that improve the situation of immigrants. The ambition is to raise the employment rate for foreign-born persons so that it catches up with the rate for the population as a whole. Intensified measures are needed to improve induction programmes for persons born outside Sweden, to increase the number of work placements and to combat the discrimination of immigrants.

Young people are normally unemployed for a shorter time than other age groups. However, between 2001 and 2003 long-term unemployment increased among young people, although it fell again in 2004. In the autumn of 2003 the National Labour Market Board set a target of halving long-term unemployment among young people, and this target was achieved in August 2004. The Board has continued in 2005 to concentrate on keeping the number of long-term unemployed young people under control. The target is to make sure that the number of long-term unemployed young people does not exceed 3,000. The Government proposed in 2004 that municipalities should be required to keep themselves informed of how people under the age of 20 spend their time, that every unemployed young person should draw up an individual plan of action together with the employment services within 14 days, that young people who have not obtained a job within 90 days should be offered organized job-seeking activities and that – on a temporary

basis between 1 February and 31 December 2005 – recruitment incentives could be issued for people aged 20-24 after only six months' participation. A national coordinator has been instructed by the Government to investigate ways and means of enabling young people who have completed upper secondary or post-secondary education to get a foothold in the labour market more quickly. SEK 30 million has been allocated to enable 500 unemployed persons under the age of 25 to study at folk high schools. Resources have also been allocated for 1,000 new places in advanced vocational training. The Swedish National Board for Industrial and Technical Development has been instructed by the Government, in cooperation with the education authorities, to implement a three-year national entrepreneurial programme.

In accordance with the goals of disability policy, disabled persons are to have the same opportunities to take part in the world of work as other people. Disabled persons have priority in all general labour market programmes, and there are, moreover, several programmes that are reserved for them. Wage subsidies are the commonest form of subsidized work for disabled people. On average, about 60,000 employees take part in the programme every month. Samhall AB, which is the largest organizer of sheltered work in Sweden, had 21,946 employees with occupational disabilities at the end of 2004.

The Government appointed a special investigator in 2002 to analyse the labour market programmes for persons with reduced work capacity. The terms of reference included assessing the effectiveness of the programmes and the appropriateness of the current funding models and also proposing measures that would lead to a shift from subsidized to unsubsidized work. The investigator's final report was presented in September 2003. A commission of inquiry was also appointed to review the management and policy of Samhall AB, whose task is to

provide meaningful and stimulating work for occupationally disabled persons. Its report was submitted in May 2003. The proposals presented as a result of these inquiries are currently being considered in the Government Offices.

Unemployment insurance

The payment of unemployment benefits is conditional upon a strict requirement that the recipients of the benefits must actively look for work and be prepared to take appropriate work or take part in a suitable labour market programme. The Swedish Unemployment Insurance Board was set up in 2004 for the purpose of supervising the unemployment insurance funds and overseeing the employment services' handling of cases related to unemployment benefits. The Government has instructed the National Labour Market Board to report on and analyse the effects of the changes in the rules relating to unemployment insurance that were made in 2001. The Board has started to prepare guidelines, methods and techniques for making job assignments and following them up. The Government has also prepared an action plan identifying the main priority areas for the employment services' controls.

The social economy

In Sweden, businesses in the social economy are mainly operated in the form of cooperatives and associations. The Government supports the county's 25 local cooperative development centres, which are instrumental in the establishment of 200-300 new enterprises every year. SEK 90 million was invested in advisory services and information about cooperative enterprise in 2002-2004. This support for cooperative enterprise will be extended to 2005. A total of SEK 54 million will be allocated on an annual basis for advisory services and training programmes.

The European Social Fund

The aim of the European Social Fund's Objective 3 programmes and the Community Initiative Equal is to support implementation of the employment strategy and to complement national policies.

The Objective-3 programme

The overall strategy for the European Social Fund's Objective 3 programme in Sweden, and for the corresponding elements of the Objective 1 programme, is to strengthen the position of the individual in the labour market by training both persons in work and unemployed persons. Expenditure under Objective 3 will total SEK 6,630 million (€748 million) during the programme period 2000-2006.

The Objective 3 programme is divided into four priority areas. The purpose of the priority area *Competence development for the employees* is to encourage innovation and flexibility by means of task-oriented training. The priority area *Increased employability and entrepreneurship* includes active measures to strengthen groups without any attachment to the labour market by helping them to support themselves, study, rotate jobs or start an enterprise. The purpose of the priority area *Integration, multiplicity, and equal opportunity* is to integrate people who were born in another country and increase the involvement of disabled persons in the world of work. Special measures will also be taken to reduce gender segregation in the labour market. The priority area *Local development* focuses on regional and local stakeholders, and its purpose is to create jobs at the local level, including jobs in the social economy.

The Equal Community Initiative

The purpose of the Equal Community Initiative is, by means of transnational cooperation, to stimulate new methods for combating all kinds of discrimination and

inequality in connection with the labour market, both with regard to unemployed and employed workers. One of the overall goals of the Swedish Equal programme is workplaces without discrimination and inequality and characterized by diversity. The expenditure on the Equal programme in Sweden is estimated at about SEK 1,500 million, including national cofinancing, during the programme period 2000-2006. Up to now, the average budget per project has been about SEK 18 million.

The aim of several of the projects is to shorten the path to employment for people without any attachment to the labour market, especially people with substance abuse problems and people undergoing correctional treatment, by participation and empowerment. Another feature is the importance attached to effective interaction between the authorities and tailor-made measures. Methods have been devised to make it possible for individuals to shape their own future. Another example is the projects that promote young people's future job prospects by trying alternatives to the youth school system. Alongside these and other projects there is a continuous process of disseminating results and influencing the structures that are the cause of discrimination. This work is mainly organized in "theme groups" in order to make it possible to generalize the results of the new methods developed within the programme as much as possible. Continued dissemination and attitude-influencing measures are planned under the Equal programme up to 2008.

Better integration into the labour market

The Government has taken a number of measures to improve labour market integration. These include supplementary training, validation of foreign professional qualifications and work trial placements. The employment services' resources have been increased so that they can provide more individualized support. A declaration

of intent has been agreed by the government and representatives of the central labour market organizations under which the parties will share responsibility for utilizing everyone's skills. New anti-discrimination legislation has been drafted and anti-discrimination bureaux are being set up. A commission of inquiry (the Committee on Discrimination) will propose provisions on plans to promote equal rights and opportunities at work irrespective of ethnic affiliation, religion or beliefs.

Better opportunities for combining work and family life

Maximum fees for pre-schools and after-school care, based on a certain percentage of the parents' income up to a specified ceiling, were introduced in 2002. Municipalities are not obliged to apply this system, but they all do. Municipalities that apply the system are eligible for government grants both to compensate for the loss of income and to assure the quality of the services. The introduction of the fee ceiling has led to an equalization of the fees for pre-schools and after-school care between municipalities. Almost 60 per cent of Sweden's municipalities have introduced flat rates that are not linked to the children's attendance.

Work has started on a review of the rules of the Employment Security Act relating to fixed-term employment contracts and on consideration of an enhanced right to parental leave under the Parental Leave Act. The aim is to consider whether it is necessary to strengthen the protection of employees who elect to exercise their right to take out leave in connection with parenting and whether the existing labour legislation meets the employees' requirements with respect to job security and codetermination. Among other things, a general ban is proposed on discrimination against job-seekers or employees who take out parental leave.

3.2 Promoting universal access to resources, rights, goods and services

A reformed pension system

The pension reform of 2003 involved radical changes in the pension system. The pension system for people born in 1937 or earlier who drew an old-age pension in December 2002 was changed on 1 January 2003. The previous basic pension protection, i.e. the basic national pension, a pension supplement and a special income tax deduction for old-age pensioners, ceased to exist and were replaced by a fully taxed "guaranteed pension". The purpose was to ensure that everyone would receive at least as large a pension after tax as they had before.

The Swedish Social Insurance Administration has analysed the effects of the changes. The Administration's report shows that the reforms have had the desired effect. The pension amounts paid out after tax in December 2002 were compared with the corresponding amounts paid out in January 2003. The comparison showed that virtually everybody received a higher net pension. The average increase was SEK 250 per month, despite the fact that many municipalities raised the local taxes in the new year. Since the pension floor was adjusted upwards, those with the lowest pensions were usually the ones who got the highest raise. Only about 25,000 people were paid a lower net pension, and in these cases the reason was usually the new rules relating to tax on non-residents or that the preliminary withholding tax deducted in December 2002 was too low.

The rules relating to housing supplements were changed at the same time as the pension reform. Basically, the changes consisted of adjustments to the reformed old-age pension rules. Apart from that, the rules were modernized in order to change the concept of income to harmonize it with the tax legislation and the

rules on housing supplements. For the most part, the changes in the housing supplements paid to old-age pensioners achieved the expected results. The housing supplements paid out in July 2003 were on average SEK 1,757 higher than those in December 2002 on an annual basis. Housing supplements for people over the age of 65 have been raised after the reform. As of 1 January 2005 the ceiling was raised by SEK 170 per month to SEK 4,670. The maximum supplement that can now be paid is 91 per cent of the actual cost of housing up to the ceiling.

The introduction of a subsistence allowance for elderly persons on 1 January 2003 represented another significant improvement for the most disadvantaged retirees. This allowance guarantees everybody over the age of 65 a reasonable standard of living and an allowance that covers reasonable housing costs. The allowance, which is means-tested, was paid out in 2004 to over 11,000 people.

Flexible indexation of income-related old-age pensions

The method of indexation of income-related old-age pensions was changed at the start of 2002. Previously pensions were tied to the consumer price index, but they are now tied to pay trends. As a result of this indexation method income-related pensions rose by 2.9 per cent more than if they had still been tied to the price index. Income-related pensions rose in 2005 by 0.8 per cent, while the price base amount rose by 0.3 per cent.

Good health and care for all

The primary health service is a core element of the health and medical services. The national action plan for development of the health service confirms the right to a permanent and dependable relationship with the health service together with the guarantee that each individual patient will be treated with respect and consideration in his or her contacts with the service. Sweden's local

authorities received additional grants of almost SEK 9 billion during the period 2001-2004 in order to implement the action plan. The development agreement on which the action plan was based expired at the end of 2004. In order to extend these development efforts the Government and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions signed two new agreements on extension of the national action plan. About SEK 4 billion was additionally allocated in 2004 to reinforce the primary health service, elderly care and psychiatric care. Starting in 2005, these resources are included in the general government grants to the local authorities.

In 1997 an appointment guarantee was introduced under which the primary health service promised to provide help either by telephone or by a personal call on the same day that the patient contacted the service. A total of SEK 3.75 billion was allocated for implementation of the appointment guarantee during the period 2000-2004. The appointment guarantee will be expanded and transformed into a treatment guarantee on 1 November 2005. The guarantee, which will cover all planned treatment, involves a commitment by county councils to offer treatment within 90 days of the treatment decision. In order to improve patient safety and effectiveness and efficiency in the health service, the government has, together with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, signed an agreement on more uniform and appropriate use of IT support in the care sector. The care services will be formulated in order to support the introduction of IT-based tools for documentation, drugs management etc.

Public health

Parliament passed a bill relating to public health goals in April 2003. The bill proposed a national objective and a cross-sectoral goal structure consisting of 11 goal areas. In order to reinforce and improve the efficiency of public

health policy at all levels of society, the Government has set up a national management group for public health affairs under the Minister for Public Health and Social Services. Its members are the directors-general of 16 agencies that are particularly important from the point of view of public health and a representative of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

A process of mainstreaming public health has been launched by a small number of agencies and will later be expanded. 17 agencies were instructed in 2004 to report on the action taken by them in the public health sector. A number of agencies and county administrative boards are collaborating with the National Institute of Public Health on the formulation of indicators for monitoring important public health factors. Municipalities are also attaching increasing importance to public health.

The member states agreed at the WHO's fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in June 2004 to prepare national action plans for children's environment and health. The National Board of Health and Welfare has been instructed, in consultation with the agencies concerned, to draft the Swedish action plan. It is to complete this assignment by 31 March 2007.

Sports programmes to reach out to new groups
The Government's support for local youth sport activities, for which SEK 674 million was allocated in 2005, encourages young people to participate in sporting activities. In addition, the government is allocating a further SEK 1 billion during the period 2003-2006 for the *Handshake* initiative. A condition for this grant is that the sports movement should pursue and intensify its efforts to reach out to new groups of people, especially young people, keep charges down so that no children are excluded on account of high costs, improve the opportunities for girls to take part, combat drugs and further develop cooperation with schools.

11-point programme to reverse the health trend

In order to curb the sharp increase in sick leave rates and the number of new disability pensions, the Government presented an 11-point action programme in 2001 with a view to improving occupational health. The programme included broad-based measures to improve the work environment, clarification of employers' responsibility, measures to facilitate a quick return to work in connection with sickness and better statistics and research in this area. The first item on the programme was to formulate national goals to improve occupational health. The Government presented two such goals in the autumn of 2002. The first of these was to half the number of sick leave days by 2008; the second was to reduce the number of new grants of activity support and sickness benefit – previously known as disability pensions – by 2008.

Much of the 11-point programme was implemented in 2002 and 2003, including various measures to fine tune the sick leave system and to renew and improve work-related rehabilitation. Two other major measures were implemented in 2004 and 2005. The first of these has to do with a system of voluntary financial coordination in the rehabilitation sector between the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, a county council, a county labour board and one or more municipalities that was launched on 1 January 2004. The target group consists of people who are in need of coordinated rehabilitation measures from several of the cooperation partners in order to attain an adequate level of work capacity or improve it. The other has to do with a system to be introduced in 2005 under which employers will have to contribute 15 per cent of the cost of sick pay. This requirement applies in cases where full sick pay is paid out to the employee, and its purpose is to increase the incentives for employers to assume more responsibility for working conditions and integrate preventive and rehabilitation measures into their business activities. The previ-

ous rules, under which employers pay sick pay for the first 14 days and sick pay corresponds to 80 per cent of normal pay, were reintroduced in 2005.

Starting in 2005, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency will in connection with all decisions to pay sickness benefit for an indefinite period carry out a new examination of the insured person's work capacity. Such examinations will be made at least once every three years. Routine check-ups on people who have been granted sickness benefit or activity support will also be stepped up in future.

The items in the 11-point programme that still remain to be implemented are measures to strengthen and improve corporate health services and completion of the review of work environment legislation. It is expected that proposals will be presented in these areas in 2005 and 2006. The measures that have already been taken and made an impact have helped to gradually reduce sick leave rates, calculated in terms of the number of sick benefit days, since 2003. But the number of new activity and sickness benefits that have been granted has not fallen. In its most recent review of progress towards these goals in the 2005 Budget Bill the Government stated that it should be possible to achieve the targets, although this will probably call for further measures by the Government and other parties.

Administration of social insurance is one of the Government's most important tools for reversing the negative trend as regards health at work in accordance with the abovementioned objectives. The changes in the administration of social insurance were completed in 2004, and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, a new integrated Government agency, was established in January 2005. This measure will make it possible to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations and ensure more uniform application of the law, and consistent methods are now being used in the administration of social insurance throughout the country.

Lifelong learning

Better quality and higher staff density in schools

As of 2002, municipalities must provide pre-school services for not less than three hours a day or 15 hours a week for children whose parents are unemployed or on parental leave for care of another child. A public, free pre-school system for all 4- and 5-year-olds was introduced in 2003. In order to increase staff density and improve quality in pre-schools, schools and after-school care, special grants to municipalities were introduced in 2001, and these funds will be used to employ an estimated 15,000 teachers and other specialists in schools, as well as 6,000 pre-school teachers, children's nurses and other staff in pre-schools.

The process of implementing the Government's quality programme for schools, which was launched in the spring of 2003, continues. The Government has assigned various tasks to the school authorities, including action to clarify the guidelines for the municipalities' preparation of quality statements, the development of a national test system and the issuance of general recommendations to schools to help them with their task of drafting forward-looking individual development plans, which will be introduced in *compulsory school* and equivalent school systems in 2006. In 2004, Parliament adopted several measures designed to further improve the quality of *upper secondary school* education and increase the percentage of students who complete their programmes. These measures include the introduction of local consultations between schools and the world of work, development of workplace learning and the introduction of a new apprenticeship training scheme. The quality of the education offered to students who do not satisfy the requirements for admission to the upper secondary school national and specially designed programmes will be improved by expanding the individual programmes to

full length from 1 July 2006.

Pupils who need special support

Young people with disabilities generally live with their parents and are educated in the ordinary school system. In order to guarantee a satisfactory sign language environment the government provides special education for pupils who are hearing-impaired, deaf or congenitally deaf and blind through the Swedish Institute for Special Needs Education. A teaching materials council was set up in 2004 to promote the supply of and access to teaching materials for young people and adults with disabilities.

Adult learning

Parliament adopted objectives and a strategy for adult education and its development in 2001. The Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning was set up in 2002 for the purpose of raising educational and methodological standards with regard to flexible learning in folk high schools, educational associations and local authority-administered adult education and offering distance learning programmes where such programmes cannot be provided by municipalities.

In order to ensure national equivalence, high quality standards and legal certainty in connection with the evaluation of adults' knowledge and skills (outside higher education), a Government committee is collaborating during the period 2004-2007 with working life organizations and the education sector on the development of evaluation methods and support for other efforts in this area.

A recruitment grant was introduced in 2003 to encourage adults to study at compulsory school and upper secondary school levels. People with a low level of education who are, or risk becoming, unemployed, or need more time than other students to achieve their study goals on account of a disability, are eligible.

Advanced Vocational Education, which consists of regular programmes within the framework of the Swedish education system, was set up in 2002. These short (usually two-year) post-secondary programmes are designed and taught in close collaboration with the world of work and lead to an advanced vocational qualification.

Study financing

Expenditure on student support totals SEK 20 billion a year. The student support system is designed in such a way as to offer people with lower levels of education more generous terms. In order to improve study opportunities for certain target groups even further, the Government has proposed introducing a supplementary grant for students with children and better opportunities for older people to study by raising the age limit for eligibility for student support to 54. There is a short-term study grant for the recruitment of under-educated adults that is administered by the trade unions. Intellectually disabled persons are also eligible for short-term support for adult education courses.

Higher education

A recruitment committee was appointed for the period 2002-2004 for the purpose of broadening recruitment to higher education and reaching out to new target groups. SEK 120 million was allocated to close on 100 active recruitment projects. SEK 70.5 million was allocated to higher education institutions in 2001 to stimulate their efforts to broaden recruitment and develop methods for accurately assessing skills.

SEK 10 million per year was allocated during the period 2002-2004 for special theoretical and practical training at higher education institutions to improve the employment prospects of immigrant graduates.

Programmes in segregated areas

The most important task of the Swedish Agency for School Improvement is to act to improve the situation in pre-schools and schools in segregated areas. These efforts are concentrated on pre-schools and compulsory schools, but the Agency also pays attention to upper secondary schools. Its function is to identify, collect and analyse success factors and disseminate instructive examples. The Government has allocated SEK 70 million for 2006 and SEK 155 million for 2007 to reinforce measures in schools in segregated areas.

Pre-schools serve an important multicultural purpose. Steps should be taken to ensure that all children whose native language is not Swedish are given support to improve their ability to communicate both in Swedish and in their native language. The Swedish Agency for School Improvement has a government-sponsored website that contains information and various communication tools for mother tongue teachers. As a complement to the efforts to improve the education situation in segregated areas the government decided in May 2003 to launch a four-year pilot project involving subject teaching in the pupils' mother tongue in grades 7-9 of compulsory school.

Upgrading skills in elderly care

There is a pressing need to develop elderly care, especially in the light of demographic trends. Measures to upgrade skills are essential for the provision of good care services for the elderly, both in the short and long term. Closer cooperation was established on the government's initiative in 2003 between central Government and local government representatives on certain key issues relating to elderly care services. This cooperation covers funding, society's responsibility and ways and means of meeting skills needs in elderly care.

Good, affordable housing

The production of new housing has increased sharply in response to Government measures to stimulate housing construction in recent years. All in all, housing production has increased from about 19,000 housing units in 2002 to an estimated 29,000 in 2005. The incentives provided in 2001 and 2003, respectively, were designed to increase the production of rented housing, since sufficient rented housing is a prerequisite for mobility in the housing market. Such housing also serves an important purpose by ensuring that households that are not in a position to invest capital in their home can nevertheless enjoy a good housing standard.

It is often more difficult for young people than for other groups to meet their housing needs. The problem here is the shortage of low-rent housing. In many cases, too, there is no longer a municipal housing agency to allocate apartments that become vacant. Apart from this, many young people do not meet the requirements for obtaining a lease, for example permanent employment. Subrenting is therefore the only realistic alternative for many of them. A national housing coordinator was appointed in April 2005 to review the situation of young people and propose measures to facilitate their entry to the housing market. The Government has also instructed the National Housing Credit Guarantee Board to investigate the possibility of making it easier for young people to buy or rent homes.

Nowadays, segregated residential areas are areas with a high percentage of residents of immigrant origin, in particular areas that were developed under the Million Homes Programme in the 1960s and 1970s. The modern-day households in such areas often differ from the kind of household that they were originally planned for. As a result, overcrowding is a frequent and major problem. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has been instructed to identify the need for renewal and

refurbishment of certain residential and urban areas, including areas that were developed in the “record years” of the 1960s and 1970s.

In order to ensure a level playing field for all prospective tenants, steps should be taken to check that anti-discrimination legislation is complied with and that housing is allocated fairly. Housing companies’ rules for prospective tenants, both as regards applications to rent apartments and the availability of suitable apartments, must apply to everybody. Although overcrowding is an acute problem for many families, many of them are not in a position to move to a larger apartment, both because they lack the financial resources and because of the shortage of larger apartments. In order to improve housing supply planning and ensure a fairer allocation of vacant apartments, the Government has appointed a working group to review the Housing Supply Act and propose ways of clearly defining municipalities’ responsibility for housing supply.

The rights of disabled persons

The responsibility for overall coordination of disability policy is currently divided among several bodies, and the relevant resources are shared by the following agencies and organizations: the Swedish Disability Ombudsman, the National Agency for Special Educational Support and the Swedish Handicap Institute. The Government has therefore decided to set up a single state organization that can effectively assist the government and other stakeholders with the work of implementing the national action plan for disability policy. Another reason for changing the organization was the need to reinforce support for the sectoral agencies that are primarily responsible for the implementation of disability policy.

After carrying out an initial review of the agencies’ efforts to increase accessibility for disabled persons the Swedish Disability Ombudsman found that the sectoral

agencies had taken the first steps towards achieving the goals of disability policy. The Government set step-by-step targets for these agencies in 2004 with a view to ensuring that disabled people have access to the agencies and their premises, information etc. by 2010. The Committee on Discrimination has been assigned new tasks, including the task of considering the need for protection against discrimination in connection with access for disabled persons.

3.3 Preventing the risks of exclusion

More support for families with children and children at risk

The rights of the child

The Government's child policy is based on a strategy for the rights of the child and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child among the actors concerned, which has been approved by Parliament. Measures are under way in various policy areas, including economic family policy. Work on the development of indicators for the purpose of monitoring measures within the framework of child policy is currently in progress in the Government Offices.

Too many children live in families with a poor financial position. The report *Economically Vulnerable Children* (see p.7) shows that the children of single parents and parents born outside Sweden are over-represented in this group. In the vast majority of cases the reason for economic vulnerability is that the parents do not have a job. Consequently, the fight against unemployment is at the

top of the Government's agenda. In addition, initiatives are being taken to improve the situation of families with a weak financial position. The Government allocated SEK 1 billion in the 2004 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill for increases from 2006 in supplementary maintenance allowances, child supplements for students and the component of housing allowances that represents special allowances for families with children.

The Commission on the Prevention of Eviction of Families with Children

The report *Economically Vulnerable Children* also drew attention to the situation of children in families that are evicted and in some cases become homeless, as well as to certain shortcomings as regards the child perspective in the social services' administration of financial assistance. The Government appointed a special investigator in October 2004 to present proposals as to how the functions and activities of the social services and other agencies could be developed with a view to preventing the eviction of families with children and what should be done to give the authorities more responsibility for meeting children's needs. If it appears necessary to amend the existing legislation, the investigator is to present relevant proposals. The Commission will report by 30 October 2005.

Support for young people at risk

The ministry memorandum *Children in the Shadow of Crime* presented a number of measures to improve the protection of children affected by crime and to prevent young people from becoming involved in crime. Among other things, the Government proposes that children who witness domestic violence should be entitled to criminal injuries compensation from the state, that the social services' responsibility for these children should be clearly defined and that the children should be regarded as crime victims. Legislative amendments should enter into force on

1 January 2006. Another proposal is to set up children's advocacy centres ("barnahus"). In February 2005 the Swedish Prosecution Authority was instructed to collaborate with the Swedish National Police Board, the National Board of Forensic Medicine and the National Board of Health and Welfare on several pilot projects involving the coordination of investigations of cases where there is reason to suspect that children are the victims of serious crimes. One of the main aims of this initiative is to reduce the strain on children in connection with the conduct of parallel investigations by setting up a "one-stop shop" where all the necessary resources are concentrated. The pilot projects will run from 2005 to 2007.

In order to improve the situation of children whose parents are detained, the National Prison and Probation Administration has been instructed, in consultation with the National Board of Health and Welfare, to carry out an analysis of the situation of children in connection with their contacts with a parent who is in custody or prison. A report will be presented by 15 March 2006. In order to call attention to the child perspective in court proceedings the Government has taken measures to place more emphasis on observing the principle of what is best for the child. A legislative amendment that entered into force on 1 July 2004 covers cases in which a court is considering deporting an alien who has a child in Sweden. In such a situation the court must now give special consideration to the child's need of contact with its parent, the nature of this contact and how the child would be affected by a deportation order.

Sexual exploitation of children

A special investigator was appointed in April 2003 to study and present information about the sexual exploitation of children. The investigator's report, which was submitted to the government in 2004, concludes that poverty, patriarchal structures and the sexualization of

society have created favourable conditions for sexual exploitation, that there is a connection between child pornography and sexual abuse and that the Internet exposes children to greater risks than ever before. The Commission concludes that there is a need for closer cooperation between all the parties concerned in order to deal with these problems. The Children's Welfare Foundation was granted funds for the purpose of raising awareness and arranging conferences about sexual exploitation in Sweden.

Human trafficking for sexual purposes was incorporated into Penal Code as a new offence in July 2002. The scope of criminal liability was extended on 1 July 2004 to include human trafficking that occurs inside the country and trafficking for non-sexual purposes, e.g. forced labour or the trade in organs.

Young offenders

The Government has appointed an inquiry to review sanctions for young offenders in the context of developing a system of sanctions for young people that is pedagogical and transparent and creating a better climate, on the basis of young people's needs, for their return to social behaviour, thus bringing about positive change. The Juvenile Crime Commission presented its proposals in December 2004 in the report *Interventions Against Young Offenders*. The report is an important and useful contribution to efforts to develop the abovementioned system of sanctions.

More effective and transparent control in the social services

The social services have an important role in welfare policy by complementing the universal support systems. Supervision is an important regulatory instrument when it comes to ensuring compliance with the legislation relating to the social services. The Government appoint-

ed a special investigator in December 2004 to review and consider changes in the organization and division of responsibility for Government supervision with regard to social services. The purpose is to strengthen and clarify the responsibility for supervision, make the supervision process less vulnerable and ensure that it is exercised in a coordinated, structured and effective manner and with an explicit gender equality profile. The Commission will report in December 2006.

Better induction programmes for new immigrants

A commission of inquiry into the reception and induction of refugees was appointed in 2001 to improve the induction of new immigrants. One issue to which special importance was attached is the role and responsibilities of the Swedish National Labour Market Administration on the one hand and the municipalities and other authorities on the other when it comes to establishing new immigrants in the labour market. Arrangements to support them will be considered in this connection. Other issues that may be dealt with are the need to increase coordination of measures for the establishment of new immigrants at the regional level and to identify the role of regional authorities in connection with such activities. Some proposals will concern the division of responsibilities between central and local governments and may also have an impact on the implementation of integration policy.

Action plans against alcohol and drug abuse

Action plans against alcohol and drugs were implemented in 2001–2005 and 2002–2005, respectively. The action plan against drugs was carried out and coordinated at the national level by a drugs coordinator appointed by the Government. One important task in this connection was to raise public awareness and mobilize opinion against drugs, mainly by reinforcing and coordinating measures at all levels. Local and regional actions have

resulted in broad mobilization at the local level. Coordination and cooperation between municipalities and county councils have increased. SEK 325 million was allocated to implement the plan. The action plan against alcohol was designed to strengthen international cooperation and stimulate local development in order to prevent alcohol-related damage. A state committee organized coordination at the national level and is responsible for implementing the plan. SEK 550 million has been allocated for this purpose.

Safety from crime

One of the best and effective crime prevention methods is to leave the task to the local stakeholders who are most familiar with the problems and thus in a good position to find solutions. This is one principle of the Government's programme *Our Shared Responsibility*. There are at present local crime prevention councils in about 86 per cent of Sweden's municipalities. These councils are made up of various bodies such as police authorities, schools, social services and the private sector who work together to prevent crime and increase safety and security.

In 2004 the Government instructed the National Council for Crime Prevention to monitor and evaluate implementation of the Visiting Ban Act. Its task includes preparing background material to make it possible to propose feasible and appropriate measures to reduce the number of infringements of visiting bans, thus making protection of victims more effective. The Council has also been instructed to analyse the situation of children in connection with visiting bans. It is important to ascertain the extent to which the protection and safety of children is taken into account in connection with the issuance of restraining orders and to ascertain when such orders are issued in order to protect children from threats or violence.

3.4 Helping the most vulnerable

Measures against long-term dependence on social assistance

The Government appointed a commission of inquiry in February 2005 for the purpose of reviewing public interventions to help people of working age who are dependent on social assistance to find work. The commission is to propose measures that will facilitate the transition from dependency on social assistance to self-support by their own work. The aims of the inquiry are to achieve the following with respect to the target group:

- to strengthen the primacy of work and skills by requiring more active efforts,
- to improve the economic incentives to work,
- to recognize skills irrespective of age, sex or ethnic origin,
- to place the individual centre stage and apply the rules consistently,
- to clarify and improve the division of responsibilities and collaboration between central and local government.

The commission is to report on 1 November 2006.

A contract for life – a stronger continuum of care for substance abuse

In order to stimulate municipalities and other bodies to develop and strengthen care of substance abusers the Government has allocated a total of SEK 820 million during a three-year period for a targeted Government grant whose purpose is to improve opportunities for people with substance abuse problems to receive the treatment they need. Most of the grant is earmarked for the municipalities to encourage them to strengthen all aspects of the care continuum. A special investigator has been appointed by the government to present proposals for an agreement on care services between the

Government and the municipalities which will specify the obligations to be met by the municipalities to be eligible for the targeted government grant for care of substance abusers. The purpose of the proposals will be to improve these care services and create an appropriate framework for the provision of more care that is high-quality and long-term. The commission will report by 1 October 2005. The care programme for substance abusers is entitled *A Contract for Life*.

Better support for the mentally ill and mentally disabled

The Government appointed a psychiatry coordinator in October 2003 to review matters relating to cooperation, working arrangements, resources, capacity-building etc. in the treatment, care and rehabilitation of persons with mental illnesses or mental disabilities. The coordinator's task is to achieve better cooperation between the responsible authorities and closer coordination of interventions so that people with mental disabilities receive satisfactory treatment and support as regards rehabilitation, accommodation and employment. The coordinator's mandate expires on 1 November 2006. SEK 500 million has been allocated for 2005 towards the provision of the necessary psychiatric beds and support measures and to stimulate the improvement of various activities on behalf of people with mental disabilities.

Action to combat violence against women

Violence against women is a serious social problem and a threat to women's life and health. Various measures have been taken in recent years to improve the support given to women at risk. There is, however, considerable variation in this respect between municipalities. The Government has appointed a special investigator to study and analyse the support given by municipalities to women who are at risk of violence and their children and

to what extent they receive help, and to present proposals as to how the social services should support such women and their children in conformity with the municipalities' responsibility and how this support could be strengthened and improved. The commission will report by 30 June 2006. The National Board of Health and Welfare has been instructed to study the extent to which municipalities have adopted action plans in connection with their efforts to help women at risk of violence. The Board will report by 30 October 2005.

Action to combat honour-related violence and oppression

For a number of years now the Government has followed up the situation of young people, both girls, boys, young women and young men, who are subjected to oppression, threats and violence by relatives that is justified on the grounds of the need to uphold family honour. Girls and young women in particular are subjected to extreme control by their relatives and denied opportunities to participate in the same activities as other young people. In some cases this violence has even led to the murders of several young women. Young people are sometimes also exposed to threats and violence from their families on account of their sexual orientation.

The county administrative boards, which have studied the extent of this problem on behalf of the Government, estimate that 1,500-2,000 girls and young women are exposed to honour-related threats and violence from their relatives. 10-15 per cent of them are estimated to be in need of sheltered accommodation. The county administrative boards in the three counties in which the metropolitan areas are situated have supported the establishment of sheltered accommodation. About 70 places in various kinds of accommodation are currently available to young people all over the country.

The Government has allocated SEK 180 million for the

period 2003-2007 for measures designed to ease the situation of this group of young people. These funds are being used mainly for education and advocacy and to stimulate cooperation between various public authorities that come into contact with young people who live under threat. The county administrative boards in the three counties mentioned above are also responsible for supporting the provision of sheltered accommodation for these young people. The National Board of Health and Welfare has, at the request of the Government, presented proposals for a national support programme for the purpose of supporting personnel who work with such young people, especially in the social services and in schools.

Continued Government support for action to combat homelessness

The National Board of Health and Welfare received a Government grant of SEK 30 million during the period 2002-2004 to stimulate and support the efforts of municipalities and organizations to combat homelessness. Municipalities, county councils and organizations have shown great interest in participating in these development efforts. Funds from the Government grant have been distributed to about 20 local development projects whose aim is to prevent homelessness and evictions. The target groups include families with many children with an immigrant background, tenants who risk being evicted and mentally ill people with substance abuse problems. Since knowledge about the extent and nature of homelessness is necessary for the implementation of effective action to combat it, the Board has also developed a standardized model for local homelessness surveys within the framework of the abovementioned assignment. The Board will proceed with its development efforts until the end of 2007. This assignment includes a national survey of homelessness in 2005 and thereafter every two years.

Measures for offenders in correctional treatment

The correctional service is responsible for acting to prevent relapses into crime, inter alia by making careful preparations for the release of prisoners. This calls for close cooperation between the correctional service and other responsible authorities and for gradual reintegration. The pilot project that was initiated in 2002 has shown that those who were offered this opportunity improved their social situation, especially as regards work and housing. The project was therefore extended on 1 April 2005. A three-year drug programme in the correctional service, for which the Government allocated SEK 100 million, was also launched in 2002. The programme has helped to develop methods and approaches and has improved the capacity of the correctional service for treating clients who are drug users, which is increasingly the case. SEK 120 million has been allocated within the framework of the programme *A Contract for Life* (see p. 27) for further interventions by the correctional service. A commission of inquiry has reviewed the legislation governing the execution of sentences and presented proposals for a new consolidated Correctional Service Act. It paid special attention to the question of whether the execution of sentences can be modified without detriment to security and the protection of society in such a way as to prevent relapses into crime.

3.5 Mobilizing all relevant bodies

The strategic approach adopted in the 2003 Swedish action plan was to raise awareness of the EU's efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion and to encourage and support the establishment of local processes aimed

at social participation in partnerships between local authorities, other relevant authorities and organizations. Consequently, there were many contacts in connection with the work on the national action plan. Another important aim was to utilize and disseminate users' own experiences. A Users Committee was set up in 2003 under the Minister for Public Health and Social Services in the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to strengthen user influence in connection with the implementation of the national action plan. The committee is described in greater detail in section 4, *Examples of good practice*.

In connection with the Government Offices' public programme on the Europe Day, which was held on 9-11 May 2005, an open seminar was held on the EU's cooperation on poverty and social exclusion. The seminar was held for the purpose of raising awareness among the general public about the ongoing EU process. It was also possible to follow the seminar, which was broadcast live by the SVT 24 channel, on the Government's external web.

In 2002 the Government set up a Popular Movement Forum in order to create a meeting-place for a dialogue with representatives of popular movements and associations about their status and potential for acting as a coherent social voice in matters that are important to democracy. The Forum has discussed ways and means for people to organize themselves and how to eliminate obstacles to such organization. Activities in 2005 have included a seminar on the need for public meeting rooms for democratic movements, and among the seminars planned for the autumn are a seminar on new social movements and another on community organizations, power and integration.

The Government launched democracy initiatives in the 2003 general election campaign and the 2004 European Parliament election campaign in order to involve groups of people who play little part in community development. A similar initiative is planned for the general election campaign in 2006.

4. Examples of good practice

The Committee for User Influence in social development processes

In the light of the strategic approach to the 2003 national action plan, which involves strengthening the user perspective in community development processes, the Government decided in the summer of 2003 to set up a committee for user influence in community development at the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, which is chaired by the Minister for Public Health and Social Services. The committee is a vehicle for consultations between the public sector and voluntary and user organizations and a forum for consultations and exchanges of information in connection with implementation of the national action plan against poverty and social exclusion. One of its aims is to mobilize all actors in efforts to combat economic and social vulnerability. The committee also aims to serve as a model and confer legitimacy on consultation arrangements at the local and regional levels. The committee, which started its work in the autumn of 2003, consists of 12 members, all of whom are appointed by the Network Against Social Exclusion, and one representative each of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions and the National Board of Health and Welfare. In order to concentrate its focus the committee devotes its efforts to the most socially and economically vulnerable users. It meets four times a year and between meetings it operates as a network. It has arranged a number of public seminars in order to inform Members of Parliament and representatives of the Government Offices, agencies and municipalities of users' experiences of homelessness, drug abuse and psychiatry. The committee plans to hold a major conference in 2006 to disseminate examples of good practice in connection with efforts to strengthen the

user perspective and prevent poverty and social exclusion.

The Equal partnership Empowerment for the Future
The Swedish Equal partnership *Empowerment for the Future*, which consists of Lund School of Social Work and Public Administration, the insurance company Folksam, the FUNK Association in Gothenburg and Basta Work Cooperative, has been designated by the European Commission one of the five Equal projects in the area *Social Economy and Social Enterprise*, and its experience will be disseminated as examples of good practice in the EU. As a result of this process the FUNK Association in western Sweden has, with the help of Basta Work Cooperative¹³, been transformed into the enterprise Basta West, where more than 20 former drug users now work and live. Starting in 2006, the company will pay its own way and consequently will not be obliged to rely on public grants. A one-year vocational and entrepreneurial course (the "YES School") has been opened at Basta Work Cooperative in Nykvarn and offers various vocational courses. The programmes, in which adult students with a history of substance abuse take part alongside school-aged graduates of upper secondary school individual programmes, are approved by the social partners and confer upper secondary education qualifications in the subjects that are studied. A course in Social mobilization has been started at Lund School of Social Work and Public Administration to which persons with a history of substance abuse and experience of social exclusion contribute by sharing their experience. The course is currently being expanded into a six-week course, and people who were previously socially marginalized will be able to take part and obtain 5 higher education credits.

¹³Basta Work Cooperative is a social enterprise that offers former substance abusers an alternative to drugs in the form of skilled work, home and interesting leisure activities. About 100 former drug-dependent individuals live and work in Basta. More information about Basta is available at www.basta.se.

5. Updates for 2005–2006

In the 2005 Spring Finance Fiscal Policy Bill the Government proposes a number of initiatives in areas that are designed to reduce economic and social vulnerability.

Work and education

An employment package for jobs and education is proposed. It includes the following features:

- SEK 1 billion for jobs for the long-term unemployed, including jobs made possible by tax rebates for employers who hire long-term unemployed.
- Higher ceiling for wage subsidies.
- Better employment services.
- More places in advanced vocational training. 1,000 new places will be made available on a temporary basis.
- 500 new educational places will be established at folk high schools.

Welfare

- Better conditions for children and families, partly as a result of higher child allowances.
- Higher floors and ceilings in the parental insurance system.
- Higher housing allowance and maintenance support.
- Increased resources for more pre-school staff.
- Better learning and quality in schools, partly as a result of higher teacher density.
- Investment in healthcare; a national treatment guarantee will be introduced in 2005.
- Increased security for elderly people, partly as a result of increased resources for and better quality and capacity in elderly care. SEK 1,050 to municipalities in 2005–2007.
- Increased day-to-day security as a result of increased resources for the judicial system and better support for

women who are at risk of violence and their children. SEK 130 million to strengthen women's refuges in particular.

- More housing as a result of measures to stimulate housing construction.
- Additional resources for municipalities.

More people in work

- New rules for admission to higher education that favour the admission of young people, thus expediting their entry to the labour market.
- The tax rules for occupational pensions and private pension schemes will be reviewed with a view to enabling more older people to remain at work.
- Gender equality will be increased as a result of measures to solve the problems of pay discrimination and involuntary part-time work.

Sweden should lead the way in integration

- Better induction programmes for new immigrants.
- Labour market integration to be improved.
- Measures to combat discrimination.
- The goals, focus, organization and effectiveness of integration policy will be reviewed by a parliamentary committee.

Increased accessibility for people with disabilities and more job opportunities for occupationally disabled people

- Improved accessibility to public transport.
- Car allowances for people with disabilities will be raised by SEK 65 million.
- The ceiling for wage subsidies for the recruitment of disabled people will be raised.

Introduction

The Network Against Social Exclusion will continue its efforts to eliminate economic and social vulnerability in Sweden. We consider it extremely important to disseminate the process of combating poverty and social exclusion and its content. The Network's extensive knowledge of social integration has helped it to create meeting-places and dialogue between users and decision-makers. In our opinion, public authorities should create a more favourable climate for the work of voluntary organizations and give them a say in decisions that have an impact on people's lives. The action plan must focus on the most disadvantaged groups and universal welfare policy must be strengthened in order to prevent continued exclusion.

Vulnerability has many faces. Society's treatment of a vulnerable person depends largely on whether that person is a man, a woman, a child, a disabled person, a Swede or of other ethnic origin. It is important in connection with efforts to combat social and economic vulnerability to understand and recognize what we regard as contradictory attitudes to vulnerability. The specific nature of a person's vulnerability and who that person is often play a decisive part in the support offered by society. The conviction that all human beings are equal in dignity and rights must characterize all efforts to combat social exclusion at all levels, both by public authorities and by organizations.

Focus on the most vulnerable

Special measures at the national and local levels should be targeted at the most vulnerable groups. These groups

are not fixed once and for all since new groups are added all the time. The work of voluntary organizations helps to identify new vulnerable groups. To the groups already mentioned (see our contribution to the 2003 action plan) we add criminals who wish to give up their marginal status, poor families with children and vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers, including those who come without documents.

*Policy should focus on treatment
by society and the user perspective*

This is an important conclusion of the work done so far by the Users Committee. Users must be treated with dignity by authorities and voluntary organizations. It is important that all those who feel excluded should have the chance to take control of their lives. Consultations and cooperation between public bodies and voluntary organizations are essential, and the initiatives taken by several voluntary organizations in this respect should be put into practice.

*Universal welfare policy as a
means of preventing social exclusion*

The national action plan against poverty and social exclusion should emphasize strategic components of the universal welfare policy that can prevent marginalization. A case in point is the importance of labour market and housing policies. A universal housing policy based on the utility value system would guarantee everybody the right to housing and could prevent poverty and social exclusion. However, to ensure that nobody is excluded this universal policy must be complemented by targeted

measures, for example housing allowances and adapted accommodation for people with special needs. In order to reaffirm the principles on which the universal Swedish welfare policy is based and focus on preventive measures, it is important to identify care services, school education and housing as social services of public interest and to make sure that they are not entrusted to market forces and competition rules that are liable to cause social injustice.

Labour market policy

If the integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market is to be effective there must be better coordination between different income support systems – those administered by the social insurance agency, the unemployment insurance fund and the municipalities – as well as input from new actors. If the groups described above are to find, obtain and retain jobs, serious efforts must be made to provide appropriate training and ensure that members of the target groups participate. The experience acquired from ongoing Equal projects which will soon be terminated must be utilized in the formulation of labour market and social policies.

Social enterprise

Structural changes must take place as regards interaction between public authorities. This applies especially to the administration of various subsistence allowances, which sometimes act as a disincentive to participation in work experience or education. A broader view must be taken of the labour market and there must be common access to work/rehabilitation/work retraining if more people are to have the opportunity to work in accordance with their capacity instead of becoming inactive. It is especially important to promote social enterprise, which has proved to be an effective means of integrating the most vulnerable groups into the labour market. While it offers

an alternative, social enterprise needs support for further development. The relevant rules must be modified to promote such alternatives.

User participation

Experience of the work of the Users Committee is positive. The national seminars arranged by the Committee in order to draw attention to the situation of the most disadvantaged are an important tool for drawing attention to problems and solutions. The conclusions of these seminars should be systematized in the form of measures taken both by the public authorities and by voluntary organizations.

People who belong to vulnerable groups must be given a chance to make their voices heard and have a say in their situation and the action taken by society and voluntary organizations to reduce exclusion. The Users Committee is a step in the right direction, but a system needs to be put in place to establish real user cooperation at all levels of society.

Parliament must give active consideration to the action plan

If the national action plan against poverty and social exclusion is to have the impact that is needed to achieve results, Parliament must give it active consideration and call attention to the importance of the issues raised. Parliament and/or the government should see to it that funds are allocated for innovative measures towards social integration, and a national action programme for social enterprise should be prepared.

1a. Percentage of low-income earners by age and sex 2003

	0–15	16–24	25–49	50–64	65 +	Total
Women	12	22	10	3	14	11
Men	12	24	8	5	9	10
Total	12	23	9	4	12	11

1b. Percentage of low-income earners over 16 by most frequent activity status 2003

	Employee	Self-employed	Unemployed	Retired	Other non-employed
Kvinnor	5	16	10	13	18
Män	5	25	14	8	25
Totalt	5	23	13	11	21

1c. Percentage of low-income earners by household type 2003

Single 0 – 65 år	21
Single 65 och äldre	21
Single men	19
Single women	23
<i>Total single households</i>	<i>21</i>
Two adults without children, both under 65	3
Two adults, one over 65, with children	4
Other households without children	2
Single parent, at least one child	24
Two adults with one child	5
Two adults with two children	5
Two adults, at least three children	10
Other households with children	1

1d. Percentage of low-income earners after social transfers by tenure category 2003

	Women	Men
Owner-occupied or rent-free	7	7
Rented	17	16

1e. Low-income threshold expressed in purchasing power parity (PPP), euro and Swedish kronor (SEK) 2001¹⁴

Low-income threshold	PPP	Euro	SEK
Single persons	7 196	7 747	71 098
Households with two adults and two children	9 749	10 495	96 319

2. Income distribution¹⁵ 2003

Women	3.2
Men	3.5
Total	3.3

3. Number of persons with low income during a long period¹⁶ 2001

	At least 1 year	At least 2 years	3 years
Women	624 188	354 665	185 010
Men	488 052	272 541	138 078
Total	1 112 240	627 206	323 088

4. Relative median value for low income gap 2003¹⁷

Women	15
Men	21
Total	18

¹⁴No data available for 2003.

¹⁵The ratio between the national equalized income for the 20% with the highest income to the 20% with the lowest income.

¹⁶No data available for 2003.

¹⁷The difference between median income for people under the low-income threshold and the low-income threshold itself.

5. Regional cohesion¹⁸ 2003

NUTS 21(counties)	2003
Stockholm	0.4
Uppsala, Södermanland, Östergötland, Örebro, Västmanland	0.5
Jönköping, Kronoberg, Kalmar, Gotland	0.6
Blekinge, Skåne	0.5
Halland, Västra Götaland	0.4
Värmland, Dalarna, Gävleborg	0.6
Västernorrland, Jämtland	0.8
Västerbotten, Norrbotten	0.7
Total	0.2

6. Percentage of long-term unemployed (> 12 months) as a proportion of the total labour force 2003

Women	0.9
Men	1.4
Total	1.1

7. People in jobless households

No data available.

8. Percentage of poorly educated people who do not continue their studies (aged 18-24) 2003

Women	42.6
Men	47.9
Total	45.4

¹⁸The variation coefficient for 2002 for the employment rate at NUTS 2 level is calculated for persons aged 16-64. The calculation was made by dividing the standard deviation for the number of workers by the number of workers.

9. Life expectancy at birth 2003

Women	82.4
Men	77.9

10. Self-defined health status 2003¹⁹

	Women	Men
Excellent health	3.3	3.8
Good health	3.4	3.5
Satisfactory	3.0	3.0
Poor	2.4	2.7
Very poor	2.6	2.4

11. Dispersion around the low-income threshold 2003²⁰

	40 per cent	50 per cent	70 per cent
Women	2	5	20
Men	3	6	17

12. Percentage of low-income earners anchored at a point in time

No data available.

13. Percentage of low-income earners before social transfers 2003

	Income excl. social transfers	Income incl. pension	Income after social transfers (= indicator 1a)
Women	48	32	11
Men	41	27	10
Total	45	30	11

¹⁹The quotient of the percentages in the lowest and highest quintiles on the population.

²⁰Persons with a total equivalized household income under 40-50, and 70% of the national equivalized median income.

14. Gini coefficient 2003

Women	23
Men	24
Total	24

15. Low income for a long time

No data available.

16. Percentage of long-term unemployed 2003

Women	15.9
Men	20.5
Total	18.5

17. Percentage of long-term unemployed who have been unemployed for at least two years 2003²¹

Women	0.4
Men	0.7
Total	0.6

18. Percentage of poorly educated people in adult education²²

Age	Women	Men	Total women and men
25-34	16.2	9.0	12.4
35-44	8.2	3.3	5.3
45-54	2.6	1.4	1.9
55-64	1.0	0.9	1.0
Totalt	4.6	2.4	3.4

²¹98 weeks or more.

²²Took part in the education during the reference week. Adult education not defined.



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

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