



28 February 2020

Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Mainstreaming ageing

1.1 Introduction

In June 1998, the Swedish Parliament, Riksdag, adopted the Government's proposal for a National Action Plan for the Elderly Policy (Prop. 1997/98: 113) for the years 1999-2001.¹ The purpose of the action plan was to create a national gathering and agreement on measures to develop the elderly policy in the long term. The plan covers the entire elderly policy, not just health care and social care. The Riksdag set four national goals for the elderly policy that still apply.

Older persons should

- be able to age safely and maintain independence,
- be able to live an active life and have influence in society and over their everyday life,
- be treated with respect, and
- have access to good health care and social care.

In the bill, the Government states that the goal of welfare policy is to give all persons the conditions to live a good life. A shared responsibility for the older persons of society is one of the cornerstones of a solidarity society. For

¹ Nationell handlingsplan för äldrepolitiken. Prop.1997/98:113

<https://www.regeringen.se/49bbe9/contentassets/25896d39d59943b4ba76a2717f566d0a/nationell-handlingsplan-for-aldrepolitiken>

a rich life in old age, many things are needed. The pensions must provide financial security. Culture, associations, working life and other parts of society must contribute to a high quality of life for older persons. It should be possible to stay in their home as an older person, to have access to a good social network and to continue to participate in social life. Elderly care should provide support when one's own ability fails. Health care should be available when needed. The diversity of efforts and the fact that several principals have different responsibilities make it desirable with national goals for the elderly policy. Municipal self-government guarantees that many decisions are made close to people and with regard to local conditions, but overall national goals that cross sectoral and legislative areas make the joint commitment clearer. The goals make it easier to pull in the same direction and to mobilize common resources. The effect of society's efforts will be greater. It will also be easier to compare the progress towards the goals, to demand responsibility from the politically elected representatives. National goals are thus aimed at strengthening democracy.

In the Budget Bill 2020, the objectives of the National Elderly Policy have been supplemented by another objective:

Older persons should

– be offered equal and equity health care and social care.

In 2018, the Government has published a national quality plan for the elderly care (Skr. 2017:280).² In the letter, the Government describes its views on elderly care in Sweden and how it has begun a long-term change work to adapt elderly care to demographic and technological developments. In the letter, the government states which areas should be prioritized during the next term of office. Through the prioritized efforts, the Government provides support for the development of health care and social care for the older persons with good quality based on the best available knowledge and distributed with equality and equity as the basis.

There are other national goals that have a direct impact on the care of older persons and the elderly policy. The gender equality policy goal that women

² Framtidens äldreomsorg – en nationell kvalitetsplan. Skr. 2017/18:280

https://www.regeringen.se/49ee56/contentassets/faebe5c0bff14b9fb7cd9df7625d2e10/framtidens-aldreomsorg--en-nationell-kvalitetsplan-2017_18_280.pdf

and men should have the same power to shape society and their lives also applies to older women and men.

The goal of the government's policy against discrimination is a society free from discrimination. Measures aimed at preventing and counteracting discrimination are fundamental to ensure that all persons are equal in dignity and rights. Preventing all forms of discrimination, including age discrimination, is therefore an important part of the work for participation and equality.

The national goal for disability policy, taking the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a starting point, is to achieve equal living conditions and full participation in society for persons with disabilities in a society based on diversity. In order to achieve the national goal, the implementation of disability policy shall be targeted towards four areas: the principle of universal design; shortcomings in terms of accessibility; individual support and solutions for individual support; and preventing and countering discrimination. An accessible society that is shaped by the diversity of the population is relevant also from a policy perspective regarding older persons.

The Social Services Act (2001: 453), SoL, is a goal-oriented framework law that gives municipalities great freedom to design their activities based on local conditions and needs.³ The portal section (Chapter 1, Section 1 of SoL) sets out the overall goals and basic values for the social service of the community. This introductory paragraph states that the social service of the community on the basis of democracy and solidarity shall promote people's economic and social security, equality in living conditions and active participation in social life. Furthermore, taking into account the responsibility of people for their and others' social situation, the social service should focus on liberating and developing the resources of individuals and groups. The activities shall be based on respect for people's right to self-determination and privacy. The overall goals in the portal paragraph are supplemented by provisions on goals and orientation for working with certain groups in society, such as older persons. The Social

³ Socialtjänstlag (2001:453)

https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/socialtjanstlag-2001453_sfs-2001-453

Services Act stipulates, among other things, that the care for older persons must be aimed at ensuring that older persons live a dignified life and feeling well-being. According to the law, measures within social services shall be of good quality.

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) is an important instrument for strengthening older persons' enjoyment of human rights. MIPAA helps to focus and strengthen awareness of these important issues at various levels in society and contributes to mainstream ageing at the national level. In 2016 the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs published a National follow-up to the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) in Sweden.⁴

1.2 Structure

Sweden is organized in three political and administrative levels. In addition to the national level, there is also a regional and local administrative level. On the regional level the county councils are responsible for organising, financing and providing health care services to all residents, including older persons. On the local level the 290 municipalities are responsible for social services, including care of older persons. Sweden have a long tradition of self government. That means that county councils and local authorities have wide-ranging responsibilities. They largely finance themselves by means of local and county council taxes.

The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs is responsible for parts of the elderly policy at the national level. The Ministry's area of responsibility includes health care, but also social services that include care of older persons and disability policy. The Ministry also handles issues related to pensions. Other ministries responsible for issues related to the older persons are, for example, the Ministry of Employment, the Ministry of Education and research and the Ministry of Infrastructure. There is no special mechanism for mainstreaming aging within the Government Offices. But the Swedish Government Offices have a procedure called joint drafting

⁴ More robust rights for older women and men have a positive impact when building our society. National follow-up to the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) in Sweden

https://www.government.se/4ac25f/contentassets/3f3efe664ac04ad291a3d65d0587ab54/en_national-follow-up-mipaa-webb.pdf

procedure, which means that relevant ministries are involved when submitting information to the government.

The Swedish government has high ambitions when it comes to being a leader in the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda, both nationally and internationally. The above mentioned national goals, targets and Social Service Act (2001:453), SoL, contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level, for example ensuring a healthy life and promoting the well-being of everyone of all ages and reducing the number of persons who die prematurely. Another example is to include and highlight the needs of older persons when making cities inclusive and sustainable for all, for example by developing and providing public transport based on the needs of older persons and to make green areas and public places accessible.

1.3 Laws policies and Strategic framework

Older persons are covered by regulations that exist in a variety of areas, such as:

Labour market

Sweden has a broad labour market policy that entails a number of measures, mostly aimed at the unemployed. If there is a risk of long-term unemployment (which applies to most persons aged >55), the Swedish Public Employment Service, PES, has the opportunity to offer measures at an early stage of the unemployment period, for example through guidance, validation, education, subsidized employment or traineeship. These measures' intentions are to within short help the unemployed back to a new job as well as preventing long-term unemployment. It is very important to take advantage of the skills and experience of elderly women and men in the Swedish labour market.

Education and training opportunities are crucial for individual development, participation, empowerment and employment prospects, as well as for a well-functioning labour market. In the budget bill for 2020, the Swedish Government proposes almost SEK 1.3 billion to equip more people for work, better integration, a continuation of the expansion of the Adult Education Initiative and an active business policy.

Education

A modern education system enables lifelong learning that gives every person the opportunity to grow and replenish knowledge throughout their lives. There is a possibility to uphold student grant and student loan until the age of 57. There is no age-limit for non-formal education in Sweden and anyone can apply to study at a folk high school or take part in a study circle.

The aim of the Swedish government's education policy is to equalize socioeconomic differences. All children, young persons and adults should be given the opportunity to develop their abilities and skills to their full potential regardless of age, sex and disability. Adults shall have good access to education throughout life regardless of where in Sweden they live. In Sweden higher education is, regardless of age, free of charge (with minor exceptions) for all students from Sweden, the Nordic countries, the EU/EES and Switzerland.

Social protection and social security

The national old age pension system is part of the Swedish social insurance system. It covers everyone who has worked and lived in Sweden. The benefits have a legislative foundation. The core of the system is the income-based pension which is the principal means of support for most pensioners. The income-based pension is a contributory benefit, it is paid out to everyone who has paid income tax in Sweden and thereby earned their pension entitlement. If necessary, the income-based pension is supplemented by guarantee pension, a benefit offering basic cover for those with low or no income-based pension. Around 80 percent of those who receive guarantee pension are women. Guarantee pension is based on how many years an individual has lived in Sweden.

The basic cover for old-age pensioners also include housing supplement and maintenance support for the elderly. Maintenance support for the elderly is the ultimate safety net, it is intended to guarantee a reasonable living standard for everyone over the age of 65 years. Those who may be eligible for maintenance support are mainly pensioners with no earned pension and no guarantee pension (due to a short period of residence in Sweden).

Non-discrimination

Age is one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination in Sweden and it is regulated in the Discrimination Act. The Equality Ombudsman (DO) is to

supervise compliance with the Act, promote equal rights and opportunities and to combat on seven grounds of discrimination covered by the Act which includes sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. Individuals can place complaints of alleged discrimination to the ombudsman. The Ombudsman can bring such claims to court seeking a financial penalty on account of the alleged discrimination.

Expanded protection against age discrimination entered into force on 1 January 2013. The ban on discrimination linked to age previously only applied at work and in education, but this was expanded to also cover the areas of society – goods, services, housing, general assemblies, public office, care and health care, social services, social insurance, unemployment insurance, government study grants and public appointments. According to the Discrimination Act (2008:567) all employers and education providers shall work on so called active measures. Active measures are prevention and promotion measures aimed at preventing discrimination and serving in other ways to promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of e.g. age.

The Delegation for senior labour

The Government decided in 2018 to appoint a delegation for the promotion of older labour to combat age discrimination and find ways to make better use of older persons' experience and skills. The delegation is to submit its final report by 1 October 2020.

The delegation will:

- work on issues concerning older persons opportunities in working life, the view of older persons in the labour market, prejudices against older persons, the importance of a longer working life for society and for individuals' total pensions, and the demographic change in society;
- bring together various relevant actors in society (such as researchers, opinion-makers, pensioner organizations, the social partners and relevant government agencies) to discuss these issues, provide inspiration and propose measures; and
- compile and disseminate existing national and international knowledge and research, as well as initiate new reports.

1.4 Methods and tools

Statistics Sweden produces official statistics

Statistics Sweden (SCB) is responsible for official statistics and other government statistics. This means that the authority will develop, produce and disseminate the statistics and coordinate the system for the official statistics in Sweden. Every year, Statistics Sweden makes a population forecast for Sweden. Every three years, a more comprehensive analysis is made of the future population development, where a main alternative and alternative projections are produced. For intermediate years follow-ups and revisions are made. The official statistics on elderly care show the number of older persons with contributions under the Social Services Act and include homecare services, special housing, day care and short-term housing.

Open comparisons

The National Board of Health and Welfare publishes annual open comparisons in the sectors of health care and social services. The aim is to promote local and national discussions on quality and efficiency through peer pressure, greater transparency and political accountability. Data on a wide range of quality indicators is collected through surveys directed at service providers and users, and by using official statistics. The data is then presented to illustrate how municipalities and county councils are scoring in different quality areas. The National Board of Health and Welfare presents the results on its website. The open comparisons make it possible, among other things, to compare the quality of elderly care through various indicators. Politicians, employees and the public can see the results for each special housing and for homecare services.

Today, there are gaps related to statistics linked to elderly. One such gap is access to statistics on occupational groups in the social service. The Government has therefore commissioned the National Board of Health and Welfare to analyze in 2020 and propose how the municipalities should submit appropriate information to the National Board of Health and Welfare on the various professional services groups. The purpose is to create improved planning conditions to meet the need for skills supply. The assignment will be reported to the Government in March 2021.

Quality registers

The Swedish quality registers are an important tool for following up outcomes.

The Swedish Palliative Register

The Swedish Palliative Register has been introduced to improve the care of terminally ill patients and to offer care units support and a structured approach in care during the final stage of life. The care body that looks after a patient during the final stage of his or her life registers data on for example:

- informative conversation,
- assessment of pain and other symptoms,
- if anyone present at the time of death, and
- conversations with patients' families.

Senior Alert

The Quality Senior Alert Register has been created to support a preventive approach to care contacts with older persons. A standardised risk assessment of individual risk is made for fall injuries, malnutrition and pressure ulcers prior to each registration, and preventative measures are taken for the people who are considered to be most at risk. The register can be used by all employees of municipal operations, hospital care and primary care, regardless of diagnosis or cause of contact.

The Swedish Dementia Register and BPSD registry

The Swedish Dementia Register (SveDem) is a national quality register for dementia. The purpose of SveDem is to improve the quality of dementia care and the goal is equivalent, optimised management of patients with dementia. Dementia is classically characterized by declining cognitive functions such as memory, orientation, language and thinking ability. In addition, these individuals often also experience behavioural and psychological symptoms in dementia (BPSD). The BPSD registry contributes, among other things, to reduce the frequency and severity of BPSD, reduce medication use in patients with BPSD and allow the health care team to work towards the same goal and provide support and reassurance for the patient.

Swedish National Study on Aging and Care (SNAC)

Access to longitudinal research data on the health of the population and the use of health care and social care plays an important role in the work to develop new knowledge about aging and health. The Swedish National Study on Aging and Care (SNAC) started in 2001 after an initiative by the Government. The study is longitudinal and follows in four locations in the country the development of the aging population in terms of health and use of health care and social care. The purpose is to provide access to researchable data in order to be able to follow changes and, among other things, provide the basis for long-term planning at local and national level. The Government currently supports SNAC with SEK 16.5 million annually.

Forte

Forte is a research council and a government agency under the Ministry of Social Affairs. On behalf of the government, Forte initiates and finances research in health, working life and welfare. Forte evaluates the effects of research and how the results can be put into practice and work with active dissemination of knowledge. In addition, Forte is tasked by the government to coordinate national research in areas such as the elderly-area.

Swedish Dementia Centre

Swedish Dementia Centre (SDC) is a non-profit organization, established in 2008. SDC is financed through governmental support and grant organizations and the commission is to collect, structure and disseminate knowledge about dementia and dementia care. SDC compile evaluations and research results, develop more practically orientated knowledge, facilitate translation of research and implementation of new knowledge into nursing and care, interventions and social policy. SDC is also a link between research, practice and decision makers and hub of a national network for research and development units.

Knowledge Guide

Kunskapsguiden.se (Knowledge Guide) is a national website that gathers quality assured knowledge from several authorities and other actors. The website is aimed at staff working closely with people who need health care and social care. It also appeals to managers and decision makers. The Knowledge Guide provides support and guidance in a number of areas such as children and young persons, women and men with disabilities and older persons. The National Board of Health and Welfare is responsible publisher

of the Knowledge Guide in collaboration with other agencies and organizations, for example, Forte, the Public Health Agency of Sweden, the Swedish Medical Products Agency and The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR).

The Swedish Agency for Health and Care Services Analysis

The Swedish Agency for Health and Care Services Analysis is an agency with the mission to strengthen the position of patients and users through analysing health care and social care services from the perspective of patients and citizens. This mission includes analysing how health and care services work, as well as reviewing how effective Governmental commitments and activities are in the area. The Swedish Agency for Health and Care Services Analysis also assist the Swedish government with advisory support and recommendations for making the operations and governance of state-run institutions more effective.

National coordinator

The government has appointed a national coordinator to promote and sustain the provision of competence in municipal financed health care and social care. The coordinator is to support the municipalities by, among other things, stimulating changes for an attractive working environment, strengthening leadership and proposing welfare technical solutions that can facilitate staff. The assignment includes, among other things, disseminating of good practices, stimulating changes in work based on knowledge-based methods and proposing welfare-technical solutions that can relieve staff and improve efficiency.

The Swedish Agency for Participation

The Swedish Agency for Participation work on the premise that everyone is entitled to full participation in society, regardless of functional ability, including older persons. The task of the agency is determined by the goals and strategies of disability policy. The agency does this by monitoring and analysing developments proposing methods, guidelines and guidance disseminating knowledge initiating research and other development work and providing support and proposing measures to government.

Civil society

The Government places great emphasis on working with civil society on issues concerning older persons. In 1991 the Government appointed a

national pensioners' committee in which the responsible minister meets the organizations that represent elderly people four times a year. The committee's terms of reference were revised in 2014 and today it comprises six pensioners' organizations. The pensioner organizations have for example been invited to dialogues, partly ahead of the Government's preparations for the 2030 Agenda and on other policy processes at the Government Offices of Sweden that affect older persons. Cooperation is also carried out at government agency level. For example, the National Board of Health and Welfare has a council for older persons for contact and cooperation with pensioners' organizations. The council for older persons provides opportunities for the organizations to contribute factual information towards the National Board of Health and Welfare's inquiries and regulations.

1.5 Good practices

Gender Mainstreaming

Sweden has a feminist government. In practice, this means a commitment to building a society in which women and men, girls and boys can live their lives to their full potential. Gender mainstreaming is the strategy used to implement the gender equality objectives, combined with "special measures", which are also used to promote development in specific policy areas (such as extra funding, extra focus, action plans, etc.). This dual approach is necessary for moving forward on gender equality. The Swedish Government Offices defines gender mainstreaming as the incorporation of a gender equality perspective in all policy areas, at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in the policymaking-process. Gender mainstreaming includes Gender-responsive budgeting, which implies incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budget process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality. <https://www.government.se/4adb29/contentassets/efcc5a15ef154522a872d8e46ad69148/gender-equality-policy-in-sweden>

Sport and physical activity

Municipalities play an important role in creating good conditions for a lifelong sporting and physical activity among citizens of all ages. This includes to create space for leisure and recreation in the planning work, to build and maintain pedestrian and cycle paths, as well as leisure and sports facilities. Sport and physical activity should be a lifelong commitment that contributes to better health and reduced loneliness among older persons. Therefore, it is important to improve access to sports for older persons as

well, and in the Budget Bill for 2020, the Government proposes a SEK 20 million investment in sports activities which, in cooperation with pension organizations, can develop the activity forms for this.

<https://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2019/09/satsningar-pa-kultur-demokrati-och-idrott-i-budgeten-2020/>

Preventing fall accidents

In Sweden, the majority of visits to emergency departments, hospitalisation and deaths are caused by accidents involving a fall. Every year, approximately 70,000 persons suffer fall injuries that are so serious they require healthcare at a hospital. Around 1,000 persons die from such falls. The majority of persons suffering fall accidents are aged 65 or older. There are measures to take, however, to minimize the risk of falling. The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare annually conducts a national campaign, Balancing more. The campaign focuses on fall accidents and informs about what one can do to reduce the risk of falling.

<https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/stod-i-arbetet/aldre/aldres-halsa/fallolyckor/balanseramera/english-tips-and-advice-for-preventing-falls/>