



Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

## National follow-up of the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) in Sweden

### Summary

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) is a global action plan that highlights older people's rights and is an important tool for strengthening older people's rights, both in Sweden and globally. A regular follow-up and evaluation of how reforms and measures contribute to the implementation of the MIPAA is therefore one way of ensuring that older persons are able to age safely, retaining their independence and being treated with respect by the community. Ongoing work is conducted in regional working groups, with Sweden participating in a working group under the UNECE, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

Demographic developments mean that demand for care of older people is expected to increase, which will, in itself, present a challenge to the ability of municipalities to provide home care and places in special housings for old persons. It is persons aged 80 and older who are the major consumers of health and social care. The development in which this group is growing therefore makes demands on the organisation of welfare services and the allocation of resources to them.

Access to housing has continued to be in focus during the period; for instance, a special form of investment support was introduced in 2016 to stimulate the construction of special housings for older persons in need of more extensive care, social assisted housing for older people and rented housing for older persons in the regular housing market. Since 2019, municipalities have been able to introduce social assisted housing for older

persons as an assessed social service. One important part of work to recognise the potential of older people is involving civil society. In order to obtain knowledge from civil society the Government introduced a method called thematic consultation forums in 2017. As the proportion of older people increases, older consumers also become a growing group. In the consumer area, the Swedish Consumer Agency is working to improve guidance to consumers in collaboration with other actors who can help consumers in particular need of support. Since January 2017 age is also a ground of discrimination covered by the Discrimination Act's requirement of active measures.

Reforms of the tax system and the social insurance systems have been implemented by the Government to improve the financial conditions for pensioners in general and those with the lowest incomes in particular. One example is the legislative amendment bringing in better basic protection in the guarantee pension that entered into force in 2019. The improved basic protection mainly benefits women, who are often older and single.

During the current period major initiatives have also been taken in the area of dementia and in welfare technology. One challenge has been to be able to recruit sufficient staff with the right skills, and the Government has therefore launched the Elderly Care Initiative. In addition, the profession of assistant nurse will be made a protected professional title. The Government has taken the initiative of introducing a reform that means that everyone receiving home care will be given a fixed social care contact who is an assistant nurse. Many persons care for or support an older relative, and work is currently under way in the Government Offices on drafting a national strategy for informal carers.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has placed great strain on society as a whole and has had a negative impact on older men and women, especially regarding isolation and involuntary loneliness. Long-known structural shortcomings in care of older people have been made clear during the pandemic. In December 2020 the Government commissioned an inquiry chair to propose a care of older persons act to supplement the Social Services Act with special provisions about health and social care of older people and provisions about a national social care plan. The inquiry chair was also charged with considering and presenting proposals that will strengthen access to medical expertise in care of older people and at service management level in

municipalities. In the Budget Bill for 2022 the Government proposes setting up a national centre of competence for care of older people at the National Board of Health and Welfare, and it has also taken a number of other measures including increasing the government grant to pensioner organisations to strengthen their work. In April 2021 the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) approved the Government's research policy bill for 2021–2024. This policy involves strong increases in appropriations for research and development throughout the country. A rapid increase in these appropriations is judged to be important since the COVID-19 pandemic risks reducing private funding of research.

## **PART 1. Background**

### **1.1 General information**

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Reference strategies for older people:

- National action plan for elderly policy (Govt Bill 1997/98:Riksdag committee report SoU24)
- Care of older people in the future – a national quality plan (Govt Communication 2017/18:280).
- National strategy for social care of persons with dementia (S2018/03241/FST).

### **1.2 National status report regarding demography**

At present, life expectancy in Sweden is 84.3 years for women and 80.6 years for men. Since the end of the 1970s men's life expectancy has increased more than women's. This means that the difference between men's and women's life expectancy decreased from 6.1 years in 1980 to 3.4 years in

2019<sup>1</sup>. One of the objectives of the Government's policy for older people is for older people to be able to lead an active life and have influence on society and their everyday lives. In recent years the number of healthy life years (HLY) at the age of 65 has increased in Sweden from 15.9 years in 2014 to 16.2 years in 2019. In 2018 Sweden had the highest figure in the EU for both women and men, 15.8 and 15.6 HLY respectively. Sweden is also one of the countries in the world that has the lowest risk of premature death<sup>2</sup>. This is a positive and welcome development. Older people today grew up in different and better circumstances than previous generations and many also have a higher level of education and a higher material standard. Many people aged over 65 continue to work and most can cope by themselves until their eighties. As a result of demographic developments the demand for elderly care is expected to increase, which will, by itself, present the municipalities with the challenge of being able to, for example, provide home care and places in special housings for a higher share of older people. This also means higher costs for the municipalities. In 2010 the total cost for municipalities of health and social care of older people was SEK 92.2 billion, which can be compared with SEK 132.9 billion in 2020<sup>3</sup>.

## Method

The Swedish Agency for Participation (MFD) has been commissioned to gather information, in dialogue with the Public Health Agency of Sweden and the National Board of Health and Welfare, from each agency about how the agency's activities in the period 2016–2020 are judged to have contributed to the implementation of the MIPAA. The Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Swedish Pensions Agency have also had special commissions from the Government to assess and report how their activities have contributed to achieving the goals and objectives in the plan. The commission to the Agency for Participation has included compiling the reports received from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Swedish Pensions Agency. The compilation also included information from the Public Health Agency and the National Board of Health and Welfare. The Agency for Participation was to carry out its commission in cooperation with the relevant actors. The Agency therefore invited representatives of civil society, including pensioner

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<sup>1</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (2021): Status report on health and social care for older people.

<sup>2</sup> Public Health Agency of Sweden (2021): Development of public health. Annual report 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Govt Bill 2021/22:1, Budget Bill for 2022, expenditure area 9.

organisations, private providers of welfare services and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) to a consultation in March 2021. In addition to the consultation, the Agency has been in touch with several other actors in efforts to gather information.

## **Part 2. National measures and progress in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS) 2017-2021**

### **2.1 Recognising the potential of older people**

*Demographic change and an ageing population make great demands on society, regulatory frameworks and social security systems. They also affect civil society and individuals. Societal actors at all levels – central government, regions and municipalities – need to take active steps to ensure sustainable economic development and financing so as to be able to meet present and future needs of security and participation for older people. Urban and regional planning and work on urban development must be based on the diversity of the population in general, and an ageing population in particular, so as to create equal and inclusive cities and communities. An ever increasing share of older persons also requires a new way of looking at ageing and age as concepts. Old stereotypes and discrimination must be countered by various means. Older people are an increasingly important resource in all societal development and active work to recognise the potential of older people in all areas is of central importance.*

*The following are examples of national measures taken and progress made in the area.*

#### **Sustainable economic development and urban and regional planning**

In 2017 the Government set up the Council for Sustainable Cities It is a forum for 11 government agencies<sup>4</sup>, along with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) and the county administrative boards, that is tasked with contributing to long-term development of sustainable town and cities. The Council supports Sweden's municipalities in their work on SDG 11 of the 2030 Agenda which is about long-term sustainable development of cities and communities. The Council's remit extends until May 2022.

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<sup>4</sup> Boverket [the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning], the Swedish Energy Agency, Formas (the Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning), the Swedish Agency for Participation, Swedish National Heritage Board, the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design (ArkDes), the Public Art Agency Sweden, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, the Swedish Transport Administration and Vinnova (the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems).

In April 2018 the Government presented a strategy<sup>5</sup> for a national policy for sustainable urban development. The strategy contains overarching objectives for sustainable towns and cities and new milestone targets in the system of environmental objectives. It will also contribute to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in the 2030 Agenda, especially SDG 11 on sustainable cities as well as the UN's New Urban Agenda and the EU's Urban Agenda<sup>6</sup>.

In 2018 the Riksdag adopted an overarching objective for public health policy and eight target areas<sup>7</sup>, including target area 5 Housing and local environment. This target area includes access to adequate and affordable housing, housing areas that are socially sustainable and sound residential environments on equal terms.

To address the challenges in welfare services and provision the Government appointed a Welfare Commission in December 2019. The Commission is to systematically identify and analyse specific measures that can strengthen the ability of the local government sector to provide welfare services of good quality in the future.

To enable older persons to have the possibility of needs-adapted support for good health, independence and good living conditions, action taken by society needs to be developed in many areas. SALAR is therefore working in 2021 on drafting a 10-year strategy for older people.<sup>8</sup>

### **An accessible society and accessible homes**

In 2016 a new form of investment support was introduced to stimulate the construction of special housings for older people, social assisted housing and rental housing for older persons in the regular housing market. In 2019 the Social Services Act was amended to give municipalities an explicit possibility of establishing special forms of housing for a new target group, social assisted housing for older people with an assessed need. This intervention is

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<sup>5</sup>Government Communication 2017/18:230, Strategy for living cities – policy for sustainable urban development.

<sup>6</sup> ibid

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/en-god-och-jamlik-halsa-pa-alla-nivaer/tema-folkhalsa-lokalt-och-regionalt-stod/vad-styr-folkhalsopolitiken/nationella-mal-och-malomraden/>

<sup>8</sup>See web page <https://skr.se/skr/integrationsocialomsorg/socialomsorg/aldre/strategiforaldreomsorgen.34144.html>

intended to increase the security of older persons who are not secure about staying on in their own homes.

The Housing Adaptation Allowance Act (2018:222) entered into force on 1 July 2018. The purpose of this allowance is to give persons with disabilities the possibility of an independent life in their own home. The allowance enables many individuals to stay on in their own homes by taking simple measures to adapt the accessibility of their home.

SALAR has produced a set of supporting documents to make it easier for municipalities to make sustainable choices when planning new special housings, other forms of housing and other premises in care of older people.

In 2021 the industry and interest organisation for non-profit housing companies, Sveriges Allmännyttta, produced a knowledge document Future-proof housing – design and assessment of good housing for older people. It brings together experience and success factors that contribute to good housing for older people.

### **Accessible services**

In view of the EU procurement directive, the Public Procurement Act was amended in 2016. The amendment means that in the case of acquisitions intended for use by natural persons, the needs of all users, including accessibility for persons with disabilities, have to be taken into account when determining the technical specifications. The national procurement strategy was adopted in 2016 and is intended to highlight procurement as a strategic tool for achieving various societal objectives. One of the strategy's seven objectives is "Public procurement that contributes to a socially sustainable society". The strategy stresses the importance of contracting authorities and entities making use of the principle of universal design at an early stage of their purchasing process, i.e. ensuring strategically that purchases can be used by as many people as possible and does not exclude certain users in advance. The strategy provides support and guidance about how social considerations can be taken into account in all parts of the procurement process.

In 2018 the Government established a new agency, the Agency for Digital Government (DIGG), with the mission of coordinating and supporting administration-wide digitalisation so as to make the public administration

more effective and appropriate. DIGG is also the supervisory authority for work on digital public services and has, moreover, to play a promoting role to make public actors' digital information and services accessible to everyone, irrespective of functional ability.

A new Administrative Procedure Act entered into force in July 2018. The new Act requires an authority to be available for contacts with private persons and to inform the public about how and when they can make these contacts.

The Act on Accessibility of Digital Public Services applies in Sweden since 2018. The Act and associated regulations are based on the EU's 'Website Accessibility Directive', which entered into force in 2016. The Act applies to central and local government authorities, including decision-making assemblies, publicly governed bodies (not having an industrial character) and certain private actors with public funding in education and health and social care.

Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the accessibility requirements for products and services (the 'Accessibility Directive') was adopted in April 2019. The purpose of the Directive is to contribute to the proper functioning of the internal market by approximating laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States as regards accessibility requirements for certain products and services. The products and services covered by the scope of the Directive include banking services, eBooks, electronic communications services, eCommerce services and certain features of air, bus, rail and waterborne passenger transport services, automated teller machines, ticketing machines, check-in machines; and interactive self-service terminals. The Government decided on 16 April 2020 to appoint an inquiry chair tasked with considering how to implement the Accessibility Directive in Sweden. The inquiry's report was submitted in May 2021 and was sent out for consultation.

Regulation (EU) 2018/1724 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 October 2018 establishing a single digital gateway to provide access to information, to procedures and to assistance and problem-solving service (the 'Single Digital Gateway Regulation' was adopted in October 2018 and its purpose is to make digital services accessible to private individuals and companies in certain areas. The National Board of Health and Welfare is the



gateway regarding the Patient Mobility Directive and regarding general information about health care in Sweden through the newly established Your Europe database.

### **Involving older persons and organisations representing them**

Collaboration with civil society is a central part of policy for civil society and in the implementation of Sweden's international undertakings in the area of human rights. As long ago as 1991 the Government established a national pensioner committee that now consists of six pensioner organisations that meets the responsible minister four times per year. The Government and national agencies also collaborate on a continuing basis with pensioner organisations in other matters.<sup>9</sup>

In 2017 the Government established a new form of consultations, called thematic consultation forums, to obtain knowledge from civil society. The purpose of thematic consultation forums is to contribute to raising the quality of the Government's supporting information by deepening and widening knowledge and perspectives in questions where civil society has important contributions to make.

At a municipal review conducted by the Agency for Participation in spring 2021, almost 250 municipalities had some form of council for older people/pensioners, or a welfare services council that included older people issues.

### **Older people as consumers**

In 2020 the Government gave the Swedish Consumer Agency several commissions intended to bolster the consumer area. They include improving guidance for consumers and analysing the situation in the market for consumer credit and risks of over-indebtedness. In the first of these commissions the Consumer Agency is to identify and support various societal actors, e.g. actors turning to older persons that are capable of helping consumers in special need of support in safeguarding their interests in connection with purchases and in handling problems regarding their private finances. In the second commission the Consumer Agency is to report, in close cooperation with Finansinspektionen (the Swedish Financial Supervisory Authority) and the Swedish Enforcement Authority, the

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<sup>9</sup> Written input from the National Board of Health and Welfare to the Agency for Participation, final version 28 May 2021.

existence of areas where the Agency makes the assessment that there is scope to improve consumer protection. The Government has also commissioned the Consumer Agency to identify considerable obstacles to the proper functioning of consumer markets and to sustainable consumption. Its analysis is to focus on obstacles where the risk of harm to consumers is particularly serious. The Consumer Agency is to take account of knowledge from relevant research, for example behavioural research, and its application. In recent years the Consumer Agency and several other actors have continued to work in various ways to reduce consumers' problems in telephone sales.

### **Simplified home care**

In 2018 the Government introduced simplified rules regarding when municipalities offer home care to older persons. The purpose is to give the municipalities that so wish the possibility of granting older women and men interventions in care of older people in a simpler way and with more scope for participation and self-determination. There is still the possibility of applying for assistance in the usual way.

### **Older people a new target group for the Swedish Inheritance Fund**

The purpose of the Swedish Inheritance Fund is to promote activities of a voluntary nature that benefit children, young people and persons with disabilities. As of 1 July 2021 older people are also one of the Swedish Inheritance Fund's target groups. Financial support is provided for activities that are developing for one of the Fund's target groups and that promotes the target group even after financial support from the Fund has ceased. When assessing whether to provide support, account is taken of whether the target group participates in the planning or implementation of the activity. Every year some 400 projects throughout the country receive support from the Fund. In 2020 SEK 799 million was distributed in grants. Increasing the number of target groups makes it possible to contribute to a much needed development of ideas, in particular in matters concerning older people.

### **Countering discrimination and ageism**

Since January 2017 age is also a ground of discrimination covered by the Discrimination Act's requirement of active measures. Active measures means examining, analysing, addressing and following up risks of all forms of discrimination.

In 2018 an inquiry was appointed to review what measures are needed to ensure compliance with the provisions on active measures in the Discrimination Act.<sup>10</sup>

In 2021 Lund University published an anthology about perspectives on ageism. It consists of 15 chapters in which researchers shed light on the varying forms of expression and complexity of ageism.

## **2.2 Encouraging a longer working life and capacity to work**

*A long and good working life is an important health factor for the whole of the population at the same time as it is essential for the long-term funding of Swedish welfare systems. In order to achieve this, there are many indications that the Swedish labour market needs to fundamentally change its attitude to older workers. The rising sick leave rates are a clear indication that work environment management and working conditions today are not sufficiently effective and flexible to be able to meet the needs of workers at different ages. The support and measures available in the labour market area need to continue to change so as to be able to effectively promote a longer working life and the possibility of career change and transition at higher ages. Many different strategies are needed to act in different ways to increase the supply of labour in the population and postpone departure from the labour market. To extend working life, labour market policy must therefore take account of factors that improve the quality of work and raise the will to stay in work, but also reduce the impact of the factors that contribute to the desire to leave working life.*

*The following are examples of national measures taken and progress made in the area.*

### **Life-long learning**

In September 2019 the Government proposed introducing a development period to ease the transition. It would also contribute to meeting new demands for skills and mobility in the labour market. The possibility of receiving education or training during the development period would, for example, provide an opportunity and incentive to train for occupations where there is a shortage of labour.

To make it possible to work longer, the system of financial aid for studies also has to make transition and skills development possible during a larger part of life. In 2021 the Government has therefore decided to raise the upper age limit for the right to student aid and education entry grant from 56

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<sup>10</sup> Terms of reference 2018:99, Effective and appropriate supervision of the Discrimination Act.

to 60 years and to change the repayment rules for student aid by the corresponding number of years. The new provisions apply to studies conducted as of 2022. To increase the possibilities for adults in the middle of their working life to train the Government is also planning new public support for transitioning studies to be introduced in 2023. The support for transitioning studies improves the financial conditions for education and training for persons with work experience. It improves flexibility, increases the transitioning capacity of companies and employees and increases security in a labour market in rapid change.

The Government has a number of innovative partnership programmes that are intended to bring business, academia, civil society and public actors together in the face of thematic societal challenges to jointly prioritise what needs to be done to address them. The partnership programmes are thereby intended to assist in finding innovative solutions that address the major societal challenges and contribute to Swedish competitiveness. One of the four partnership programmes for 2019–2022 is a programme for skills supply and lifelong learning.

### **Countering unemployment at all ages and encouraging a longer working life**

From an international perspective, both women and men in Sweden work for a long time. At the same time, there are still many people, linked to certain industries in particular, who do not manage to work up until retirement age, and the number of sick leave days is increasing in certain sectors. This negative trend applies to female-dominated health and social care occupations in particular.

In 2018 a committee – the Delegation for Senior Labour – whose remit has been to contribute to more knowledge about research on older people's opportunities was appointed. The Delegation has been assisted by a number of researchers and experts who have contributed 23 reports on various aspects of older labour. The Delegation presented its final report on 30 November 2020 and a consultation has been held on the report. The views of the respondents and the knowledge base produced by the Delegation are an important input to and have been passed on to the Office for Sustainable Working Life. The Office was established by the Government on 2 September 2021. One fundamental part of work on its remit is to put synergistic measures in place, and the work of the Office will therefore largely be about identifying needs, proposing measures, consulting

and coordinating so that measures and policy for a sustainable working life hang together coherently. One central part of this work is dialogue and consultations with the social partners and other actors of importance for the functioning of the labour market. The Office is placed in the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and is to present its final report on its remit in August 2024.

As of 1 January and 1 April 2020 respectively, individuals can be offered the benefits occupational injury annuity and assistive devices for work until and including the month when the individual attains 68 years, instead of, as previously, until and including the month when the individual attains 67 years. This can also contribute to the goal of encouraging a longer working life as well as the capacity to work.

Two examples of incentives for employers to hire and retain workers who have reached 65 years are the reduction of employers' social security contributions introduced in 2013 that applies as of January the year when the employee will reach 66 years and the reduced costs for insurance benefits under collective agreements for employees who have passed the age of 65 in many industries.

Prioritising work environment issues means that more people will manage, be able and want to work a full working life. In 2016 the Government therefore adopted a work environment strategy for 2016–2020. In February 2021 the Government adopted a new work environment strategy for 2021–2025. One of its objectives is a sustainable working life – everyone should be able, manage and want to work a full working life.

In 2018 the Government established the Swedish Agency for Work Environment Expertise. The Agency has the Government's remit to be a national centre of expertise for work environment issues.

### **A sustainable and flexible pension system for a longer working life**

In recent years the Government has taken a series of measures to completely remove the difference in the taxation of pension and pay. In the period 2016–2020, for example, the Government has removed the 'pensioner tax' in a number of stages. In addition, a new benefit in the form of an Income pension complement has been introduced as of 1 September 2021.

In 2020 the mean retirement age for 2020 was 65.0 for persons who began taking national public pension in that year. The differences between the sexes are small, 64.9 years for women and 65.0 years for men.<sup>11</sup> Two pension-related legislative amendments entered into force on 1 December 2019 and 1 January 2020 respectively. One was an increase in the minimum age for drawing income-based national pension. It was raised from 61 to 62. Certain adaptations were also made to the increase of the age limit for the right to remain in employment to 68 as of 2020. A new concept was also introduced in the Social Insurance Code: the benchmark age for pension. The benchmark age was adopted in 2019 and begins to function in 2026, when the benchmark age is set at 67. The purpose is for the benchmark age to replace the present-day norm of retiring at 65.

On 1 January 2020 the age limit in the Employment Protection Act was raised to 68, and on 1 January 2023 it will be raised to 69.

Parts of the basic protection for pensioners were raised on 1 January 2020. The basic level in the guarantee pension was raised by SEK 200 per month for everyone receiving guarantee pension, the housing cost ceiling in the housing supplement for pensioners was raised from SEK 5 600 to 7 000 per month and equal treatment of income from own work was introduced in the calculation of housing supplements for pensioners. At the same time, an exempt amount of SEK 24 000 per year for income from work was introduced in maintenance support for older people. One purpose of the changes is to improve the situation of the pensioners who are worst off financially. The improved basic protection mainly benefits women, who are often older and single.

The Budget Bill for 2022 presents a proposal for further improvements in the housing supplement for pensioners. The proposal increases the consumption support in the housing supplement from SEK 340 to 540 per month for single persons and from SEK 170 to 270 per month for married persons as of 1 January 2022. It also increases the housing cost ceiling from SEK 7 000 to 7 500 per month for single persons and from SEK 3 500 to 3 750 per month for married persons.

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<sup>11</sup> Swedish Pensions Agency (2021): Retirement ages and the length of working life

### **Gender-equal incomes and pensions**

Compared with men, women still have a lower employment rate, shorter working hours, higher absence from work and lower pay. In 2019 the gross pay gap was 9.9% and the net pay gap was 4.4%. From a gender perspective it is important to point out that this calculation is based on full-time pay, since women work part time to a far greater extent than men.

In March 2020 the Government appointed a commission for gender-equal lifetime incomes. The commission's remit is to present proposals intended to increase economic gender equality in Sweden in the long term. The commission is to present its final report in December 2021.

Steps have also been taken in work in the cross-party Pension Group towards gender-equal lifetime income during the period being reported. In January 2017 the Pension Group agreed on a plan for further work to reduce the differences between women's and men's pensions.

The Swedish Pensions Agency is also working continuously to integrate a gender equality perspective in its core activities. The Agency's plan for gender mainstreaming of activities in the Swedish Pensions Agency in 2015–2018 has been implemented. In its appropriation directions for 2021 the Government has tasked the Agency with continuing to develop its gender mainstreaming.

### **2.3 Ensuring dignified ageing**

*Everyone has the right to have their human rights fulfilled, even at high ages. This means that people have the right to age in security and that they have the right to self-determination and therefore possibilities to continue to have an influence on their own lives. This also means a right to be able to be active in and influence the design of society. Respect for human rights also means treating the individual with respect and integrity and individuals having access to good and person-centred health and social care when needed.*

*The following are examples of national measures taken and progress made in the area.*

#### **Greater institutional protection of human rights**

On 18 March 2021 the Government adopted the Bill Institute for Human Rights (Govt Bill 2020/21:143). The Riksdag approved the legislative proposal in June. The purpose of the Institute for Human Rights is to promote and protect human rights at national level. The new Institute is to

follow, examine and report on how human rights are respected and realised in Sweden. It is also to perform the tasks that an independent mechanism has under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Institute for Human Rights will start its activities on 1 January 2022.

### **Independence and self-determination**

All health and social care is based on voluntary participation.<sup>12</sup> The Swedish constitution provides protection against forcible treatment through the ban on deprivations of personal liberty and on any physical violations by the public institutions.<sup>1</sup> In general it is therefore not possible in health and social care to take measures against the will of the individual. Health and social care of persons with a reduced capacity to take decisions, on account of dementia for instance, has to be provided with as little of restrictions and forcible measures as possible.

In 2015 an amendment was made to the Patient Act partly in order to strengthen and clarify the position of the patient and to promote the patient's privacy, self-determination and participation. The new provision states expressly that health and medical care may not be given without the consent of the patient unless otherwise provided by law.

The Continuing Power of Attorneys Act entered into force in 2017.<sup>13</sup> Continuing power of attorneys are an alternative to special representatives and administrators and a complement to ordinary power of attorneys. Their purpose is to increase persons' self-determination by ensuring that private individuals are able to retain control of matters of great importance to them. A continuing power of attorney begins to apply when the individual no longer has the capacity to make their own decisions on account of illness or mental disability, for instance.

In July 2019 the Government appointed an inquiry to make a review of the rules on special representatives and administrators (representatives). The purpose was to contribute to ensuring that the persons who are in need of a representative will be able to rely on getting the help and support they need.

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<sup>12</sup> Under the Patient Act (2014:821), the Social Services Act (2001:453), the Health and Medical Services Act (1982:763) and the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments (1993:387).

<sup>13</sup> The Continuing Power of Attorneys Act (2017:310).



Its remit includes reviewing the rules in the area to ensure that they are modern and legally certain.

### **Living with dementia**

Every year between 20 000 and 25 000 people get dementia in Sweden. During the current period, major initiatives have been taken in the area of dementia. The initiatives have included a broad knowledge raising in society, as well as measures to find forms for effective action in the area of dementia.

In 2017 the Swedish Agency for Participation presented its final report on a commission to conduct outreach work in cooperation with the relevant organisations of users and relatives in order to describe the living conditions of people with dementia and increase the public's knowledge of their situation.

In 2017 the National Board of Health and Welfare published an updated version of its guidelines National guidelines for health and social care in dementia. The Board has also carried out evaluations of health and social care for persons with dementia and has contributed actively to entering views in the WHO's Global action plan on dementia, which was adopted in 2017.

In 2018 the Government adopted a national strategy for social care of persons with dementia. Through its strategy the Government wants to work to improve the quality of social care and increase security for women and men with dementia and their relatives.

In 2019 the National Board of Health and Welfare was commissioned to produce guidance for daily activities for persons with dementia. In the same year the Board published a standardised sequence of interventions for dementia. It is a model for multi-professional collaboration for person-centred health and social care for dementia aimed at regions and municipalities.

### **Violence and other crime against older people**

Age can, generally speaking, entail a particular vulnerability and a greater risk of being subjected to certain types of criminal offences such as fraud. In 2016 the National Board of Health and Welfare produced a training course on violence against older people that is mainly aimed at persons who come

into contact with older people in their work.<sup>14</sup> In January 2017 the 10-year national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women began to apply.<sup>15</sup> The strategy covers all ages.

The Board has also produced supporting material for detecting violence against older people; it consists of the training material Bruises and silver hair and the on-line course Violence against older people. The Board has an ongoing government commission regarding following the development of work in health and social care on men's violence against women. As part of this commission, work is under way on producing training material on violence in close relationships, which includes violence against older people.<sup>16</sup>

In 2020 the Swedish Police Authority, working in cooperation with pensioner organisations <sup>17</sup> and Victim Support Sweden, made a new launch of the meeting package Don't try to cheat me, which is aimed at older people and is intended to strengthen their capacity to resist attempted frauds and remove the feeling of shame about having been a victim.

### **The potential of digitalisation**

For older people with an increasing need for care, various technologies can contribute to retaining or increasing security, activity, participation and self-determination. During the period covered by this report several major steps have been taken and commissions given in the area, as the use of welfare technology plays an important part in increasing the possibilities for older people to be able to live independent lives as fully participating members of society.

In 2016 the Government and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) reached an agreement on a common vision for eHealth work up until 2025. In 2025 Sweden is to be best in the world at using the potential of digitalisation and eHealth in order to make it easier for people to achieve good and equitable health and welfare and to develop and strengthen their own resources for greater independence and participation in community life. The agreement has been followed by several implementation

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<sup>14</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (2016) Violence against older people.

<sup>15</sup> Govt Comm. 2016/17:10, A national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women, Extract from Power, goals and agency – a feminist policy for a gender-equal future.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> PRO and SPF Seniorerna.

plans. In 2018 the Government decided to provide a government grant of SEK 350 million to Swedish municipalities for investments in welfare technology or means of facilitating the introduction of this technology. In 2019 the Government and SALAR reached an agreement on care of older people – technology, quality and efficiency focusing on older people. The agreement covers SEK 200 million, the bulk of which is distributed as a targeted government grant to the municipalities.

The development of eHealth and welfare technology in the municipalities is followed up regularly by the National Board of Health and Welfare. The Board's follow-up from 2020 shows increased use of digital technology in most of the areas surveyed.<sup>18</sup>

### **Health care**

The great increase expected in the coming years in the number of older people, especially persons who are 80 years and older, is expected to lead to a greater need of both health care and care of older people. For the municipalities, the pressure on their health and social care services will increase. This will require many different measures and initiatives, such as organisational change, new skills and better collaboration between services and service organisers.

On 1 November 2020 the Riksdag adopted the Government's proposal for a reform of primary care. This is part of the transition of health care to giving patients good, local and coordinated health care that strengthens health.<sup>19</sup> The objective of the reform is to make the patient involved on the basis of their circumstances and preferences and to be able to achieve more efficient use of health care resources. The legislative amendments entered into force on 1 July 2021.

In January 2018 a new Act on collaboration in discharges from in-patient health care entered into force.<sup>20</sup> The Act replaced the previous Payment Liability Act, and the purpose of the change is to create a secure, safe and

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<sup>18</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (2020) eHealth and welfare technology in municipalities 2020. Follow-up of the developments in eHealth and welfare technology in municipalities.

<sup>19</sup> Govt Bill 2019/20:164, Moving towards local and accessible health care – a primary care reform.

<sup>20</sup> Act on collaboration in discharges from in-patient health care (2017:612).

smooth transition from in-patient health care to out-patient health care and social care. As of 1 January 2019 psychiatry is also covered by the new Act.

In April 2018 the Government presented the Bill Good and equitable health – an enhanced public health policy to the Riksdag. On 14 June 2018 the Riksdag approved the Government’s proposal of a reformulation of the overall national objective for public health and revised target areas. Target areas 8 is equitable and health-promoting health care.

### **Care of older people**

Care of older people is a central part of Swedish welfare provision. Most people will get older and may, sooner or later, need to make use of care of older people. High accessibility and quality in care of older people is important not only for older people today, but also to maintain confidence in publicly funded care of older people.

In 2020 the Government adopted a Elderly Care Initiative so as to raise and enhance skills in care of older people. Both new and existing personnel are to be given the opportunity to train as a nursing assistant or assistant nurse in paid working time. As of 2021 staff will, in addition to being given the opportunity to train as an assistant nurse or nursing assistant, also be able to obtain further training through skills-enhancing training courses in health and social care of older people. Moreover, the target group is being expanded to also include front-line managers working in health and social care of older people.

In the Budget Bill for 2021 the Government proposed the largest ever national investment of funds in care of older people. It proposed allocating permanent additional resources of SEK 4 billion to the municipalities to create better conditions for strengthening care of older people. The Government also proposed broadening and extending its Elderly Care Initiative. For 2021 an additional SEK 1.7 billion was earmarked for this in addition to what had previously been announced.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Press release, 7 September 2020, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

In July 2018 an amendment to the Social Services Act entered into force.<sup>22</sup> Under the new provision the municipal social welfare committee is able to offer home care to older people without a prior needs assessment.

In 2020 an inquiry presented a proposal for how a fixed social care contact can be introduced in home care, in both private and public services. The purpose of the proposal is to increase participation and self-determination for older people who have home care. Under the inquiry's proposal, older people who have home care have to be offered a fixed social care contact who has to look to the need for continuity, security, individualised care and coordination. This fixed social care contact has to be an assistant nurse.

The skills of assistant nurses are important in enabling quality and security to be maintained in health and social care. In 2020 the Government proposed that only a person who has a certificate giving them the right to use the professional title of assistant nurse should be able to use that title in professional activities in the area of health care and in activities under the Social Services Act (2001:453) and the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments (1993:387).<sup>23</sup> The Riksdag adopted the Government's proposal in 2021. The legislative amendments enter into force on 1 July 2023.

In April 2021 the Swedish Agency for Higher Vocational Education was given a commission to make it possible for more assistant nurses to train in higher vocational education as specialist nurses specialising in care of older people and dementia care, in accordance with the Riksdag's decision amending the central government budget for 2021.<sup>24</sup>

The work situation of employees in health and social care needs to get better. In 2021 the Government therefore introduced a government grant to promote a sustainable working life called the 'recovery bonus'. For 2021 a total of SEK 300 million is available for allocation to municipalities and regions through an application procedure. In 2022 and thereafter SEK

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<sup>22</sup> Chapter , 4, Section 2 a of the Social Services Act (2001:453).

<sup>23</sup> Govt Bill 2020/21:175, Enhanced skills in health and social care – regulation of the profession of assistant nurse.

<sup>24</sup> Amendment of appropriation directions for budget year 2021 regarding the Swedish Agency for Higher Vocational Education.

1 billion will be available for allocation to municipalities and regions for projects promoting a sustainable working life in health and social care.

### **Informal carers**

Despite Sweden's comparatively well-developed health and social care for older people, informal carers do a great deal for this group.<sup>25</sup> According to the National Board of Health and Welfare, around one in five Swedes provides support or care for a relative, and a majority of them help an older person. 55% of these relatives were women according to the Swedish Family Care Competence Centre's population study in 2018. In 2009 an amendment to the Social Services Act<sup>26</sup> clarified the responsibility that the social services have for support to relatives performing this work. Today various forms of support are available – albeit to a varying degree – in all of Sweden's municipalities for relatives of older people.

In 2019 the National Board of Health and Welfare was commissioned to provide integrated supporting information for a broad national strategy for relatives who care for or support older family members. In its report *Close relatives who care for or support older family members Supporting information for a national strategy*, the Board underlines the importance of municipalities and regions adopting a proactive, preventive approach in their work to recognise and provide support for relatives. The situation of relatives is a public health issue and should be seen as part of the health promotion and preventive responsibility of municipalities and regions.<sup>27</sup>

The Swedish Family Care Competence Centre is a source of expert support for municipalities, regions, private providers and others and is intended to contribute to higher quality and productivity in support for informal carers. In the Budget Bill for 2022 the Government proposes increasing the government grant to the Centre by SEK 5 million to SEK 15.5 million for 2022. After that the same amount will be allocated to that purpose each year. This makes the Centre more able to contribute to developing the support for informal carers in the future. Work is currently under way in the Government Offices in drafting a national strategy for informal carers.

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<sup>25</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (2020) *Close relatives who care for or support older family members. Supporting information for a national strategy.*

<sup>26</sup> Social Services Act (2001:453) Chapter 5, Section 10.

<sup>27</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (2020) *Close relatives who care for or support older family members. Input for a national strategy.*

### **Research on older people**

Research and innovation are required to start the economy and build skills, competitiveness and welfare provision. In 2021 the Riksdag approved the Government's bill for research policy for 2021–2024. This policy involves strong increases in appropriations for research and development throughout the country. A rapid increase in these appropriations is judged to be important since the COVID-19 pandemic risks reducing private funding of research.<sup>28</sup>

Since 2015 the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte) has been tasked with supporting research in the area of older people by providing SEK 36 million per year. For 2021 Forte has been allocated an additional SEK 30 million for research on older people, funding that ought to contribute to increased knowledge so as to further strengthen care of older people.<sup>29</sup>

Sweden currently has extensive research on older people at many of its major universities. The major centres for research are presented below along with a selection of research work.

#### **The Swedish National Study on Aging and Care (SNAC)**

The SNAC started in 2001 following an initiative by the Government. This study is longitudinal and follows the development of the ageing population at four places in the country regarding health and use of health and social care. Its purpose is to give access to researchable data so as to be able to follow change and, for instance, provide supporting information for long-term planning at local and national level. At present the Government supports the SNAC by providing SEK 16.5 million per year.

#### **Stockholm Gerontology Research Center (Äldrecentrum)**

The Stockholm Gerontology Research Center is an independent foundation led by a political board appointed by the Regional Council in Stockholm, the City Council in the City of Stockholm, the Municipal Council in the Municipality of Sundbyberg and Storstockholm, a local federation of the 26 municipalities in the County of Stockholm. The Center conducts a study included in the Swedish National Study on Aging and Care (SNAC).

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<sup>28</sup> Govt Bill 2020/21:60, Research, freedom, future – knowledge and innovation for Sweden.

<sup>29</sup> Govt Bill 2021/22:1, Budget Bill for 2022, expenditure area 9.

#### Aging Research Center ARC

The Aging Research Center, ARC, is a research centre that is part of Karolinska Institutet and Stockholm University. The ARC conducts research intended to work for good and equitable health, good health and social care on equal terms and better conditions for older persons' participation in community life.

#### Centre for ageing and supportive environment CASE – Lund University

The Centre for ageing and supportive environment, CASE, is a research centre at Lund University. CASE develops knowledge about ageing and health with a particular focus on supportive environments for the ageing population.

#### Centre for Ageing and Health, AgeCap

The Centre for Ageing and Health, AgeCap, is Sweden's largest research centre for ageing and health with researchers and research staff at 18 departments and six faculties from 25 different disciplines.

#### CEDER

The Centre for Dementia Research, CEDER, conducts research on how persons living with a dementia diagnosis experience and deal with their everyday lives. The focus of its research is the challenges and opportunities resulting from a dementia diagnosis.

### **2.4 Successes from the perspective of 20 years with MIPAA**

At national level, Governments have, over the past 20 years, implemented several measures from a rights perspective with the goal of enabling older women and men to lead active lives and have influence on society and their own everyday lives, to grow old in security while maintaining their independence, to be treated with respect and have access to good health and social care that is both gender equal and equitable. Important progress has been noted regarding forms of housing for older people such as investment support to stimulate the construction of special housings for older persons and social assisted housing for older people as well as rental housing for older persons in the regular housing market. Progress has also been noted in the labour market, as action has been taken to encourage employers to retain and employ workers who have attained 65 years. In addition, special reforms have been implemented in the tax system and the social insurance system to



improve the economic conditions for pensioners in general and those with the lowest incomes in particular. In the past 20 years the Swedish pension system has had a flexible retirement age. Two examples of incentives for employers to retain and hire workers who have attained 65 years are a reduction of employers' social security contributions introduced in 2013 and the reduced costs for insurance benefits under collective agreements for employees who have passed the age of 65 in many industries.

There has also been a focus on the possibilities of recruiting staff to care of older people. For instance, in the period 2015–2018 the Government provided a total of SEK 7 billion to increase staffing in care of older people. The purpose of the funding was to increase quality in social care, increase security for older people, improve the work environment for staff and improve the conditions for gender-equal, equivalent and equitable care of older people. In all, it is estimated that more than 19 000 full-time equivalents have been generated with the aid of this funding, i.e. an average of 4 800 full-time equivalents per year.<sup>30</sup>

On 1 January 2011 core values were added to the Social Services Act. The wording is that “The social services’ care of older people shall focus on giving older people a dignified life and enabling them to feel a sense of well-being (core values)”. In view of this the National Board of Health and Welfare was commissioned to produce guidance material to support work by providers on core values, stimulate developing conversations and reflect on issues concerning core values. Expanded protection from age discrimination entered into force on 1 January 2013 and since January 2017 age is also a ground of discrimination covered by the Discrimination Act’s requirement of active measures. Progress has also been made concerning the use of digital solutions and welfare technology among older people, and in 2019 seven out of 10 people in the 75 years and older age group used the internet.

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<sup>30</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (2020): Status report on health and social care for older people

## **PART 3. Healthy ageing and an active life in a sustainable world**

### **3.1 Contributions to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda goals**

#### **Measures taken regarding the 2030 Agenda**

The transition to a more sustainable society in accordance with the 2030 Agenda is under way at all levels of society. Municipalities and regions are investing in sustainable development. Civil society is making its own contributions and is influencing decision-makers. A large number of government agencies are also contributing to these efforts, both through general development work and through targeted government commissions. Examples are given below of three agencies' action around the 2030 Agenda, the Swedish Agency for Participation, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Public Health Agency of Sweden.

The *Swedish Agency for Participation* has, since 2019, been given a commission<sup>31</sup> to contribute to the disability perspective being given greater scope among public actors in their work with the 2030 Agenda. Its commission also includes analysing what role and importance the principle of universal design may have in the implementation of the agenda. An even older population requires new and sustainable solutions to enable citizens to contribute and participate as far as possible. Through work on universal design, society can be designed so that it can be used by all to the greatest possible extent without any adaptation or special design. This is also good for older people.

The *Public Health Agency of Sweden* has worked in the period 2016–2020 to integrate the 2030 Agenda and the Global Goals in its regular activities. The Public Health Agency participates each year in the work on the statistical reviews of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden that Statistics Sweden is responsible for as a commission from the Government. Statistics Sweden's statistical review in 2020 focused on inequalities between groups through the report *Leaving no one behind*.<sup>32</sup>

Data from the Agency's national population surveys – the national public health survey and environmental health survey – are used for several of the indicators in the Agenda and results for the 65–84 age group can be

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<sup>31</sup> This commission runs in 2020 and 2021, and a final report has to be presented in January 2022.

<sup>32</sup> Statistics Sweden (2020) *Leaving no one behind*. Statistical review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Sweden.

reported.<sup>33</sup> The Agency's general work on healthy ageing also includes the strategic parts of the WHO's strategy for healthy ageing in the Decade of Healthy Ageing (2010–2020) declared by the WHO.

The *National Board of Health and Welfare* is working with the 2030 Agenda and older people issues in various ways. One piece of work on older people that has a direct link to the Agenda is work on the national strategy for dementia from 2018 and the national strategy for informal carers. The Board has a commission, running until 2022, to handle strategic questions as part of the dementia strategy in the long term. The strategy is linked to several 2030 Agenda goals including targets 3.4, 5.4 and 10.2.<sup>34</sup>

### **3.2 Lessons from the management of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on older people**

In 2020 the outbreak of COVID-19 placed great strain on Swedish society, On 30 June 2020 the Government appointed a committee of inquiry in the form of a commission, the Corona Commission, for evaluation of the measures taken to limit the spread of the disease COVID-19 (terms of reference 2020:74). In its first interim report from December 2020 the Commission noted that, at that time, more than 7 000 people had died in Sweden with the diagnosis COVID-19. 46% of the deceased were women and 54% were men. Almost 90% of these persons were 70 or older. Half of them lived in special housings for older people and just under 30% had home care. The Commission also noted that even though this is a high figure, the share of deceased among older people is in line with the picture in many other countries.<sup>35</sup>

The Corona Commission, OECD and WHO all highlight that the explanation of why the spread of infection in care of older people followed similar patterns in many countries is that it involves a neglected and undervalued part of society in terms of resources that is burdened by a number of common structural problems. The Corona Commission's report describes in what way it considers that care of older people was unprepared

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<sup>33</sup> Written input from the Public Health Agency of Sweden to the Agency for Participation, final version 28 May 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Written input from the National Board of Health and Welfare to the Agency for Participation, final version 28 May 2021.

<sup>35</sup> SOU 2020:80, Care of older people during the pandemic, Interim Report of the Corona Commission.

when the pandemic began and a number of causes of the structural deficiencies in preparedness in care of older people.<sup>36</sup>

On 22 December 2020 the Government appointed an inquiry chair to propose a care of older persons act to supplement the Social Services Act with special provisions about health and social care of older people and that contain provisions about a national social care plan. The inquiry chair was also charged with considering and presenting proposals that strengthen access to medical expertise in care of older people and at service management level in municipalities. The inquiry is to report by 30 June 2022.

In the Budget Bill for 2022 the Government also proposes setting up a national centre of competence for care of older people at the National Board of Health and Welfare. By doing so the Government is strengthening national work on care of older people in order to clarify the importance of good and safe care of older people.

The National Board of Health and Welfare stresses the importance of continuing to analyse and study what factors have contributed to transmission of infection in society as a whole and in care of older people specifically. The Board also highlights that in its status report Health and social care of older people from 2019 and 2020 it has demonstrated how many years of cuts in care of older people have led, for example, to understaffing, lack of continuity and insufficient skills.<sup>37</sup>

### **Measures taken during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The ongoing pandemic covers virtually all sectors of society and societal actors, directly or indirectly. The crisis has meant a very heavy burden for many actors. This applies to health care in particular but also the municipalities and regions and the Government, the Riksdag and government agencies. Government agencies have played different roles in the pandemic, based both on their different tasks and on the different phases of the pandemic. Examples are given below of three agencies' roles and tasks during the pandemic, the Swedish Agency for Participation, the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Written input from the National Board of Health and Welfare to the Agency for Participation, final version 28 May 2021.

National Board of Health and Welfare and the Public Health Agency of Sweden.

The *Swedish Agency for Participation (MFD)* created on mfd.se the web page Information about ongoing spread of infection. Today this web page brings together various sources of support, important information and links to information available about COVID-19. Those who need information in alternative formats include older persons with disabilities, but also older people in general as a target group, since disabilities often arise with increasing age. The Agency also participated in work to produce supporting material aimed at staff who meet persons with learning disabilities and persons with autism in their work.<sup>38</sup>

The National Board of Health and Welfare has received a number of commissions from the Government on account of the pandemic.<sup>39</sup> The commissions have included drawing up national situation reports, continuously updating the Government and supporting regions and municipalities with personal protective equipment, coordination of intensive care, etc. During the pandemic the Board has also supplied health care, dental care and social services with knowledge support.<sup>40</sup>

In December 2020 the Board launched the online course Basic hygiene procedures in health and social care. The course is geared specially to work in home care, special housings for older people, housing with special services under the Social Services and housing under the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments. The purpose of the course is to describe the importance of basic hygiene procedures and to increase compliance with them.<sup>41</sup> On account of the government decision from March 2020 imposing a temporary ban on visits to special forms of homes for older people, the Board produced general advice to support those responsible for these services. This was done to enable them to grant exemptions from the ban in special cases. The purpose of the advice was to provide better conditions for uniform and legally certain assessments. When the ban on visits was extended, the Board elaborated the general advice and

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<sup>38</sup> Talking about the coronavirus and COVID-19 with persons with learning disabilities and persons with autism is available on the National Board of Health and Welfare's website.

<sup>39</sup> Most of them are being handled in a special organisation set up internally in the Board.

<sup>40</sup> Written input from the National Board of Health and Welfare to the Agency for Participation, final version 28 May 2021.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

introduced recommendations to these services to enable safe visits. The Board also produced a checklist for safe visits and films showing examples of how various services had increased safety and adapted visits.<sup>42</sup>

The Board has also been given a commission to distribute government grants to Sweden's municipalities in 2020 and 2021 to counter loneliness among older people and increase the quality of health and social care for persons with dementia. In 2020 and 2021 the Board has also distributed government grants to non-profit associations and foundations.<sup>43</sup>

The *Public Health Agency of Sweden* published several regulations and general advice statutes linked to COVID-19 in 2020. Some of the general advice statutes were amended during the year on the basis of analyses of the situation regarding transmission of the infection, including through special recommendations for persons aged 70 and older. However, the Agency communicated at an early stage that older people should take precautions to avoid infection, and this was included in the regulations and general advice adopted on 1 April 2020 (HSLF 2020:12). The Agency has analysed sequences of events and risks not only from a strict infectious disease control perspective but also on the basis of the various tasks that it has in the area of public health. The mental and physical health of older people has been taken into account when proposing measures, and a great deal of work has been started to study the long-term effects of the pandemic on public health.<sup>44</sup>

In the light of the knowledge that older people are the group that is most vulnerable to serious disease resulting from COVID-19, the Agency recommended in March 2020 that visits in care of older people should be restricted. On 1 April 2020 the Government introduced a temporary national ban on visits to special housings for older people. The national ban ended on 1 October 2020 in conjunction with the production of various forms of support for these services comprising regulations, recommendations and information material regarding how visits can be

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<sup>42</sup> Written input from the National Board of Health and Welfare to the Agency for Participation, final version 28 May 2021 and National Board of Health and Welfare (2020) National Board of Health and Welfare's Regulations on visits to special housings for older people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>43</sup> Written input from the National Board of Health and Welfare to the Agency for Participation, final version 28 May 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Written input from the Public Health Agency of Sweden to the Agency for Participation, final version 28 May 2021.

conducted so as to minimise the risk of spreading infection.<sup>45</sup> The Agency has also produced guidance, recommendations and knowledge support and been given, and reported on, a number of government commissions focusing specifically on care of older people.<sup>46</sup>

The Agency has also worked on alternative paths to social inclusion so as to combat loneliness among older people during the restrictions that apply during the pandemic. As part of its project on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on public health the Agency conducted a literature survey in 2020, Loneliness and health during the COVID-19 pandemic among people aged over 70. This knowledge support will be published in 2021.<sup>47</sup>

### **Dialogue with organisations for older people**

In 2020 the National Board of Health and Welfare's Council for older people held four meetings, three regular meetings and one additional meeting focusing on the pandemic. Parts of the regular meetings also concerned matters related to the pandemic.

The Public Health Agency of Sweden has regularly engaged in dialogues during the pandemic with pensioner organisations and other bodies, especially in conjunction with the drafting of new restrictions or recommendations. During the pandemic the Agency has also conducted dialogues and interviews with individual older persons, with representatives of pensioner organisations, with leading persons in organisations representing people born abroad and associations and meeting points for people born abroad in specific commissions. The purpose has been to capture experiences of the pandemic and special needs in different groups as well as what messages have been received and what health information is being sought. The results of dialogues and interviews have been used in a report that examines the health, mental, physical and social impacts of the pandemic and the related infection control measures among persons aged 70 and older. This report was, in turn, one of the inputs used in autumn 2020 for decisions on continued restrictions for persons aged 70 and older.<sup>48</sup> Information from this data collection work has also formed the basis for an

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> See web page <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/publicerat-material/publikationsarkiv/k/konsekvenser-for-personer-70-ar-och-aldre-av-smittskyddsatgarder-mot-covid-19/>

information measure aimed at persons aged 70 and older living in their own homes. The Agency has also had a dialogue with these organisations about the design of the information measure, with an appropriate format and tone. The organisations and associations have also been used as channels for spreading information.<sup>49</sup>

### **Countering loneliness and isolation among older people**

Pensioner organisations fill an important function in countering isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. To strengthen this work the Government has raised the government grant to these organisations by SEK 15 million in 2021. With this additional funding to break isolation among older people, their support for 2021 totalled SEK 28 million. In 2020 the Government also distributed SEK 67 million to organisations that contribute to countering involuntary loneliness among older people.<sup>50</sup>

## **3.3 Activities and preparations ahead of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020 – 2030**

### **WHO Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020 – 2030**

This section presents a selection of action from the Public Health Agency of Sweden and the National Board of Health and Welfare that contributes to work on healthy ageing and thereby contributes to the Decade of Healthy Ageing declared by the WHO.

The Public Health Agency of Sweden is participating in the work of WHO Europe on healthy ageing. For instance, in 2019 the Agency participated in a workshop, Policy innovation for active and healthy ageing in the WHO European Region Regional workshop for national policy experts on healthy ageing. In 2020 the Agency also participated in the WHO consultation regarding healthy ageing indicators and was a contact point for its baseline measurement.<sup>51</sup>

In 2015 the National Board of Health and Welfare produced regulations and general advice on prevention and treatment of nutrient deficiency in order to develop and improve the quality of care and treatment of nutrient

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<sup>49</sup> See web page <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/smittskydd-beredskap/utbrott/aktuella-utbrott/covid-19/skydda-dig-och-andra/tips-i-en-ovanlig-tid/>

<sup>50</sup> Govt Bill 2021/22:1, Budget Bill for 2022, expenditure area 9.

<sup>51</sup> Baseline Report on Healthy Ageing see web page <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/338677>



deficiency<sup>52</sup>. In 2019 the regulations were supplemented with the knowledge support Preventing and treating nutrient deficiency. Knowledge support in health care and social services. In 2017 the National Board of Health and Welfare produced an online course about fall prevention. The Board is also responsible for a national campaign intended to give older people knowledge of what affects the risk of fall accidents and what they can do themselves to prevent fall accidents. In 2018 the Board also published revised National guidelines for prevention and treatment of unhealthy lifestyles. In 2020 the Board published Primary care support for patients with unhealthy lifestyles 2019.

## **Conclusions and future priorities**

### **Progress**

Important progress has been noted during the period in achieving the objectives formulated in the MIPAA, recognising the potential of older people, encouraging a longer working life and offering dignity in old age. This has, for instance, been noted concerning forms of housing for older people by strengthening the investment support for the construction of special housings and social assisted housing for older people as well as rental housing for older persons in the regular housing market, as well as a legislative amendment that has enabled municipalities to introduce social assisted housing for older persons as a social service intervention. In 2017 the Government established a new form of consultations, called thematic consultation forums, to obtain knowledge from civil society. Expanded protection from age discrimination entered into force in 2013 and since January 2017 age is also a ground of discrimination covered by the Discrimination Act's requirement of active measures.

Progress has also been noted in the labour market, as action has been taken to encourage employers to retain and employ workers who have attained 65 years. In addition, special reforms have been implemented in the tax system and the social insurance system to improve the economic conditions for pensioners in general and those with the lowest incomes specifically, for example a legislative amendment on improved basic protection that entered into force in 2019.

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<sup>52</sup> SOSFS 2014:10.

During the period concerned major action has also been taken in the area of dementia, and in 2018 the Government adopted a national strategy for social care of persons with dementia. Progress has been made regarding the use of digital solutions and welfare technology among older people, and in 2019 seven out of 10 people in the 75 years and older age group used the internet. The possibility of recruiting new staff to care of older people has also been in focus during the period. For instance, in the period 2015–2018 the Government provided a total of SEK 7 billion to increase staffing in care of older people. During the period important initiatives have been taken such as the Elderly Care Initiative, which is intended to raise and strengthen skills in care of older people, and the introduction of a protected professional title for the profession of assistant nurse. The Government has also provided additional funding for the municipalities during the period to strengthen care of older people.

### **Challenges and future priorities**

Demographic developments mean that demand for care of older people is expected to increase, which will, in itself, present a challenge to the ability of municipalities to provide home care and places in special housings for old persons. It is persons aged 80 and older who are the major consumers of health and social care services. The development in which this group is growing therefore makes demands on the organisation of welfare services and the allocation of resources to them. Another challenge is to be able to continue to recruit sufficient staff with the right skills. The demands for good professional skills will increase in the future, and there is a shortage of professionally trained staff in most professions in health and social care of older people.<sup>53</sup>

In the past 20 years the Swedish pension system has had a flexible retirement age. Since the 1990s the retirement age has been increasing for both men and women in Sweden. Even if these increases alleviate the economic impacts of the ageing population, research shows that they are not sufficient, since the number of life years after retirement has increased at a faster rate. The combination of a greater number of life years after retirement and a workforce shrinking in relative terms creates challenges to maintaining welfare systems.

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<sup>53</sup> Govt Comm. 2017/18:280, Care of older people in the future – a national quality plan.

At national level it is important to work for equivalence across the country and to work to level out differences. This can involve differences in health between groups that are stronger and weaker in socioeconomic terms. Differences between people with a high and a low level of education, regional differences linked to demographic developments and differences between women and men.

Research needs to address the multifaceted needs found in the group of older people in the population and can contribute to the development of effective measures able to support active and healthy ageing. Research is needed to understand and respond to existing differences concerning health status, lifestyle and health care needs, with considerable differences in physical and mental health between different age groups, between sexes and between groups with different ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic situations.

Sweden has the world's first feminist government. This means that gender equality plays a decisive part in setting the Government's priorities – in decisions and in the allocation of resources. A feminist government makes sure that the gender equality perspective is present in policy design on a broad front, in both national and international work. Women and men having the same power to shape society and their own lives is a human right and a matter of democracy and justice. Several of the gender equality targets have a bearing on policy for older people; one example is economic gender equality, which is about women and men having the same possibilities and conditions concerning paid work that provides economic independence throughout life. The target of gender-equal health is about women and men, and also girls and boys, having the same conditions for good health and being offered health and social care on equal terms.