

Introduction

In 2005/06 working group 3 B decided to apply the SWOT analysis method to government gender equality policy development. The objective of the analysis was to get a grip on the more general direction that this policy was moving in different countries and to, on the basis of these findings, develop policy recommendations. The SWOT analysis focused on developments over a ten year period, between 1995 and 2005/6 and policy developments were analyzed through the lens of a) internal factors (strengths/weaknesses) and 2) external factors (opportunities/threats). The application of this model was not always an easy or clear cut endeavour. In the following I first present a summary of the 1995-2005 SWOT analysis for Sweden. I then go on to describe developments in the current Centre-right government's gender equality policy.

SWOT-analysis summary of Sweden 1995-2005

Internal factors

Strengths

The results of 1995 – 2006 Swot-analysis, verified by feminist research,¹ showed that in Sweden gender equality policy moved forward during the period investigated and that there were no indications of a backlash. To the contrary there had been an intensification of government ambitions in some areas, notably on issues such as women's power/influence in decision-making processes, the Gender Equality Act (employer obligations regarding a) the drawing up of gender equality plans, b) wage discrepancies and c) sexual harassment), men's violence against women, men and gender equality, sexualization of the public sphere and the development of the strategy of mainstreaming.

The overall goal adopted in the spring of 2006 by parliament for this policy was that: **'women and men are to have the same power to form society and their own lives'**. Four targets with indicators were adopted as measures with which to bring about the realization of this overall goal. The targets were as follows:

- Active citizenship - women and men are to have the same rights and possibilities to practice active citizenship and to form the conditions for decision-making.
 - Paid jobs that provide lifelong economic independence - women and men are to have the same possibilities to paid employment, which can provide economic autonomy throughout life.
 - Care without subordination - women and men are to have the same possibilities to both give and receive caring without being subordinated. Unpaid work in the household is to be shared.
 - Physical integrity - women and men are to have the same possibility to bodily integrity.
- Men's violence against women must stop.²

¹ See for example Bergqvist, Blandy, Sainsbury's chapter: "Swedish State Feminism: Continuity and Change" in Outshoorn, J. and J. Kantola eds. (2007) *Changing State Feminism* Palgrave Macmillan...

² *Makt att forma samhället och sitt eget liv – jämställdhetspolitiken mot nya mål*, SOU 2005:462ff.

The above goals and targets were, in short, based on the understanding that inequalities between women and men are sustained by the existence of a gender-based power structure. The gender-based power structure, assumed to be comprised of both formal and informal power structures, is conceptualized as: 1) the separation of the sexes, 2) men are superior and women inferior and, 3) men are considered the norm. This is also the way that the gender-based power structure was presented in official documents, information sheets and brochures since the mid 1990s.

The intensification of government ambitions were in part linked to the deepening of the government's overall understanding of the factors involved in the maintenance and reproduction of gender inequalities in part as result of research and in part as a result of a number of evaluations done by various government agencies.

Weaknesses

There was a discrepancy between political rhetoric and allocation of the resources needed to realize the Government's stated goals. However there were substantial increases in the funding of most of the issues prioritized and some steering-instruments, such as the Act on Gender Equality, were strengthened. The gap between goals and adequate resources impedes the realization of different initiatives. Other weaknesses to be noted are that gender equality is still to a large extent seen as a women's issue and only a few men in political positions pursue this issue. Although the issue of the role of men in furthering gender equality has over the years been on the government's agenda men are rarely the focus of government attention or initiatives.

External factors

Opportunities

The development of government understanding of gender relations and policy initiatives were linked to factors such as party competition for women's votes, the pressure from women and women's organizations both within (politicians, femocrats, the parties' women's organizations) and outside of the political institutions, the influence of gender research and the influence of EU directives concerning equal opportunity legislation.

Prior to 2006 elections a heated debate (involving political parties, women's organizations and the media) took place concerning the individualization of the Act on parental leave as a means to increase father's take out of parental leave and in extension increase gender equality in family life. Another issue in focus was the use of quotas to increase the representation of women in decision-making bodies – in particular in the business sector.

The attention of the media to gender equality issues and the legitimacy of this issue among the general public were also deemed as opportunities.

Threats

The election of the Centre-right Government was considered to be the most overriding threat to the continuation of the more positive developments of gender equality policy. Media attention to gender equality issues (most of the national and local newspapers are ideologically liberal or conservative) was feared to decline and as an extension of this a waning of the legitimacy of this issue among the general public. These developments might

in turn open up spaces and opportunities, it was feared, to the voices of individuals and groups with more anti-feminist and reactionary tendencies.

Developments after the 2006 election

General Developments after the 2006 election.

A Centre-right government – called the Alliance for Sweden – was elected by a small margin to government in the fall of 2006. The alliance is made up of four political parties: the Moderate party (conservative), the Liberal party, the Centre party and the Christian Democratic party. Centre-right coalitions have been elected to power only twice before – in 1976 and in 1991. During these periods gender equality policy initiatives were developed and passed that were in line with those passed during previous governments, thus moving this policy in a positive direction. In some cases it passed reforms that could not be passed under the rule of the Social Democratic Party. For example it was during the first period the post of Minister for gender equality was established and the first Act on Gender Equality was passed. During the 1991-1993 period the first man, and the head of the Liberal Party as well, was appointed to the post of Gender Equality Minister. During his period in office and as a result of his propositions the first quota month for fathers was passed and adopted into the Act on Parental Leave. In all he became, and still is, actively engaged in the promotion of gender equality.

The current Centre-right government's overall gender equality ambitions cannot be said to be in keeping with those of previous governments, including previous centre-right governments. Its agenda of reforms, although not its rhetoric, is moving the Swedish welfare system in a more rightist/conservative direction. Indeed previous corner stones in Swedish political culture, such as a professed political ambition for increased equality between classes and groups, have, hardly surprisingly, been dropped. This movement to the right has had what one might call 'backlash' implications in policy areas of importance for woman, including insurance-, taxation-, labour-market-, and public service policies. It has also had backlash implications for gender equality policy more specifically. The previous trend of continuity in the overall forward development of this policy has thus come to a halt. The present government's two priorities are mainstreaming and men's violence against women and a major portion of its increased gender equality budget has been devoted to these two issues. Despite the increases in funding it is rather doubtful – or still an open question - if government initiatives in these areas have on the whole moved them forward.

One remarkable – and in the Swedish context questionable - action taken by the new Minister of Gender Equality when she came into office was to remove most of the official documents and documentation up to date concerning gender equality policy development and initiatives from the government website. This website had been a rich source of information, which was made easily accessible to the general public. I called the gender equality administrative unit to enquire about this – but was given only vague and uninformed statements in response.

Gender Equality Policy Development 2006 - 2009

Gender Equality Policy Goals and Assumptions

The gender equality goals taken in Parliament 2006 are for the most part found in the present Government's official documents and brochures, including its annual budgets (see page 1-2).

The Government's priorities are however more limited. These include, as mentioned above, mainstreaming and the issue of men's violence against women, which includes violence and oppression in the name of honour and prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes.³ The issue of gender equality on the labour market, a corner stone in previous governments gender equality policy development, has until recently, not been part of its agenda.

The Government's understanding of the mechanisms underlying gender inequalities are further not in keeping with the theoretical assumptions found in official documents since the beginning of the 1990s. The theoretical assumption of a gender-based power structure has in practice, if not in word, been replaced by an understanding of gender /in/equality as being based on the attitudes and prejudices of individuals. This shift in understanding is particularly obvious in the different parties' party programs. For example the Liberal party – the party responsible for the Government's gender equality policy - acknowledges in its party programme that inequalities between women and men are based on existing structural patterns. The altering of these patterns is however considered to be the responsibility of individuals – first and foremost women.⁴ This in turn can be interpreted as return to an understanding of gender in equalities that was prevalent in government policy more than twenty years ago. This Government has, as a consequence of this shift in understanding, limited its policy measures to information and educational activities, reforms aimed at 'empowering' individual women and to increasing the rights of individuals to redress through the judicial system when discriminated (thru strengthened anti-discrimination legislation). Government pressure, through legislation and otherwise, on employers to prevent gender discrimination and actively pursue gender equality in organizations has been substantially weakened. These developments are serious set-backs in government involvement in the pursuit of gender equality.

Gender Equality Policy Institutions

When the present government came into power its prime minister appointed an mp from the Liberal party - Nyamko Sabuni – to the post of *Minister of Integration and Gender Equality*. Sabunis appointment made international headlines because she is black and comes from Africa. She had not profiled herself as being particularly interested in gender equality issues prior to the election but had instead acquired the attention of the media by making rather controversial suggestions. One such suggestion was that all immigrant girls in school should be examined to determine if they had been circumcised or not. There were other women – and a few men - in the Liberal party, who had over the years taken up and pursued different issues regarding gender equality.⁵ However none of these persons were appointed to this post. Since her appointment Sabuni has shown rather limited interest in, as well as knowledge of, gender equality matters and has further questioned and expressed suspicion of the findings in gender research.

With the Centre-right Government Sweden has acquired its first Ministry for Gender Equality. Although the first gender equality minister post was established in 1976, by the then Centre-right Government, this is the first time gender equality policy has its own ministry – called the

³ <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/4096> - as per 2009.08.26

⁴ http://www.folkpartiet.se/FPTemplates/ListPage_____1343.aspx

⁵ One such issue concerned altering the current twelve month parental leave insurance policy. They proposed that the two quota months for each parent be extended to three months and the remaining three months be up to the parents. *Öronmärk föräldraförsäkringen*, 2005.08.20, Svenska Dagbladet, sidan 5.

Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality. Included in this Ministry's responsibilities are a rather large number of policy areas. Other than integration and gender equality the Ministry is responsible for citizenship issues, consumer affairs, democracy issues, human rights, national minorities, non-government organizations, urban development and youth policy. The Ministry has a political executive body that includes a state secretary, political advisors and a press secretary and its administration is made up of divisions, offices and secretariats. One of the ministry's six divisions is *the Division for Gender Equality*.

The number of persons who work at the Division for Gender Equality has been reduced. With the change in government a number of the civil servants at the Division were either pressured to leave or left of their own accord because of professed ideological tensions. This is rather unusual in the Swedish context where bureaucrats usually serve irrespective of government and irrespective of their own particular political leanings. Among those pressured to leave her post was the head of this unit. She had worked without problems in governments not only in Sweden but in other Nordic countries and with governments of different ideological constellations as well.

The Division for Gender Equality has presently approximately 16 employees, which is considerably less than the 25-26 persons working there when the previous government was in power. Included among the previous staff members were 5-6 full time employees working with gender mainstreaming of the cabinet. Today there is only one person working with gender mainstreaming - of state agencies – not of the cabinet.

The present government increased the Division's *budget* (not including the Ombudsman agencies budget) dramatically from approximately SEK 40 million (Euro 3,700) in 2006 to SEK 400 million (Euro 37,000) annually. The government has no state agency for this policy, which leaves it to this Division to, besides its other responsibilities, put this government funding into operation effectively. As a consequence large sums have been portioned out to other agencies to distribute this money. It is an open question if these agencies have competence in this field of expertise, which of course does not mean that they cannot acquire it. In addition it is not clear from the Government's budget documents if all of the money is being put into operation.

The *gender equality expert functions* in state regional agencies, established by parliament in 1994, are still in place. These experts are responsible for overseeing gender equality policy issues and implementation in their particular regions/counties and for gender mainstreaming within their agencies.

Government Gender Equality Policy Reforms and Initiatives

The successive expansion of gender equality issues and government reform initiatives have over the years been, generally speaking, based on the problems and barriers revealed in research, government reports and evaluations as well as on EU directives.

The government priorities presented in the SWOT 1995-2006 were from the Government Gender Equality Action Plan 2004. These were:

- Representation: equal access to positions of power and influence,
- Equal pay for equal work and work of equal value,
- Violence committed by men against women, prostitution and trafficking in women for the purposes of sexual exploitation,
- Men and gender equality,
- Sexualization of the public sphere. (*Gov't Action Plan 2004*)

Mainstreaming as a method has also been a focused area of attention since the middle of the 1990s.

The *issue of increasing women's power and influence* has been a government priority since the late 1980s. *Women's representation* in politics is relatively high in Sweden, but research shows that men dominate in top positions in the public and private business sector, in the media, in higher educations, in the interest organizations.

In 2003 the then Social Democratic Government established the goal that 50 percent of all newly appointed executives in state agencies were to be women. Its professed ambition was to set a good example. The present Government has abandoned this goal and the Prime Minister, when questioned about this, responded that he was against this kind of strategy. In his opinion competence had to come first, implicitly presuming that women appointed to these positions would be appointed solely on the basis of their sex/gender and further lacking in required competence.⁶

The previous government, influenced by the Norwegian government, initiated a government investigation of the introduction of quotas to increase the pace of change in the business sector. The investigator recommended a requirement of a 40 percent representation of both sexes to boards of public joint stock companies with many shareholders and to totally state-owned companies as a first step in this direction. When the new government took office the Minister of Gender Equality and Integration made it clear that there would be no legislation of this kind since, she argued, this would be too much of an intrusion into the free enterprise system. It was her opinion that this issue could be left to the good-will of those in elite positions. The debate on a possible quota law died and during the term of this government the previous rather slow increase of women in top leadership positions has come to a halt.

A recent study of Swedish and Norwegian economic, political and social elite group perceptions on a number of gender equality related issues show some interesting results. Norwegian top leaders', more than Swedish top leaders', see women's lack of interest in top positions as the reason why there are so few women in these positions. Swedish top leaders on the other hand explain the low percentage of women in these positions as the result of discrimination and because women are kept out of the male leadership networks.⁷ and in opposition to the assumptions of the prime minister and the gender equality minister, some business elite representatives maintain that various forms of government pressure is needed to increase the number of women on boards and in executive positions. These representatives mean that the diminished progress in increasing women's representation can be seen as a direct result of the Government's position. Research of gender equality cultures among economic, political and social elites Norway and Sweden, two top gender equal countries, shows that a substantially higher proportion of

The government is however interested in increasing women's influence in family life and has passed two, in Sweden, rather controversial pieces of family policy reforms.

July 1, 2007 the parliament passed a reform giving individuals the right to apply for a 50 % tax reduction for costs for household-related services (hushållsnära tjänster). Proposals of this kind have come from the right have been heatedly debated since the middle of the 1990s and were raised again before the 2006 elections. This debate is often referred to as the

⁶ 'Slopat krav på jämställdhet' article in the Swedish newspaper: Svenska Dagbladet, 2006.12.11

⁷ Teigen, M and Lena Wängnerud (2009) 'Tracing Gender Equality Cultures: Elite Perception of Gender Equality in Norway and Sweden' in *Politics & Gender*, 5 (2009), Cambridge University Press, pp 21-44.

maid/servant debate with class-based antagonisms. Opinion polls before the election showed that a large majority of the population (70 %) were against this reform (DN 2006.10.03). Those in favour of the reform – for the most part those with high incomes on the liberal/right part of the scale - argue that it will provide more jobs and increase small business possibilities as well as increase equality between women and men. The latter argument (often referred to as ‘the life/living puzzle (livspusslet)) has to do with problems (for the most part women’s) in combining work/family obligations. Those with lower incomes and those on the left - argue that a reform of this kind provides mostly high income persons/families who already employ maids – for the most part on a black market basis – with tax subsidies for these services. They argue further that it is a waste of tax payer’s money, money that could be spent on education, day-care, care of the elderly etc. and that it further increase class cleavages.

Reforms of this kind have already been tried in both Finland and Denmark. In both cases subsidies for the most part went to high income families (who could afford to pay full wages for such services), and the reform was costly since it did not generate that many jobs. This made it a very expensive reform and in Denmark the subsidy has been dismantled altogether (LO tidningen 33, 2005.10.28).⁸ Recent statistics show that very few are applying for this reduction and that in the Stockholm region most applications are in municipalities with predominantly high income families (DN 2009.05.17).

The Centre-right Government passed another *two controversial reforms* on July 1, 2008. One is a *home-care allowance*, which is to be used for child care other than government public day-care facilities. This reform is presented as a way to increase families’ freedom of choice concerning child-care. The other is the *gender equality bonus incentive* connected to the Act on parental leave. This is presented as a gender equality reform and its ambition is to increase father’s take out of parental leave.

The **home-care allowance reform** grants parents with children between the ages of 1 and 3 a non-taxable allowance of SEK 3000 (323 Euro) a month. This allowance is to be granted by local government authorities to cover costs other than public day-care costs. It is fully compatible with working at one’s place of work and can for example be used to employ a nanny or an au pair. In Norway a home-care allowance reform was introduced in 1998. It is being disbanded as public day-care is being increased to meet the needs of families. In both Finland and Norway home-allowance has led to a cementation of the traditional male breadwinner family; a family model which has not been a part of Sweden’s family policy since the 1970s.⁹ This reform can be seen as going against one of the Centre-right Government’s main political aims, which is to work towards increasing the labour market participation of all citizens – the so called ‘work-line’. To this end the government has passed a long range of taxation (decreases for those employed) and insurance reforms (decreases in benefits and time), whereas the home-care allowance reform can be seen as working in the opposite

⁸ Eva Magnusson’s research shows that quarrels and discussions sharing household chores can create more equality in the home as well as positive for their relations (*Hon, han och hemmet – genuspsykologiska perspektiv på vardagslivet i Nordiska barnfamiljer* (She, he and the home – A gender based psychological perspective on everyday living in Nordic families with children), 2006, Natur och kultur,

⁹ Westlund, Jenny, Nordic Gender Institute (NIKK) –

http://www.nikk.uio.no/?module=Articles;action=Article_publicShow;ID=595. Nelander, Åsa (2007) *Vårdnadsbidrag – en tillbakagång i svensk familjepolitik*, Rapport nr 5/2007; Stockholm, Arbetarrörelsens Tankesmedja

direction (benefiting parents-for the most part women who stay at home) both in terms of labour market participation and gender equality.

The **gender equality bonus**, on the other hand an incentive, the government argues, for parents (mothers) to go back to work and share parental leaves equally (fathers). The more equally they share parental leave the larger portion of the bonus they will receive – up to a maximum of SEK 3.000 (323 EURO) a month and non-taxable. It is too early to say what effect this reform will have on men's take out of parental leave.

*Men's Violence against Women*¹⁰

The issue of men's violence against women and so called 'honor' related violence has been the most focused issue for the new Gender Equality Minister. Action plans on this and the related issues of prostitution and trafficking have been developed and were presented to the parliament in 2007 and 2008. The action plans were approved and substantial sums have been allocated to this problem area. In the autumn of 2007 the government allocated SEK 800 million to be used until 2010 to combat men's violence against women etc.. In July 2008 SEK 213 million to be used until 2010 were devoted to combat prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes. Large sums have been allocated to for example: 1) increase preventative measures (educational measure to be implemented in the school system, the police, the judicial system, information campaigns), 2) improve the meeting and handling of victims (health-care system, social assistance, the courts) and 3) NGOs and women's shelters.

In 1999 the Swedish parliament passed a law criminalizing the buying of sex taking the view that prostitution is part of existing gender-based power structures. In 2008 the Government appointed an inquiry to evaluate the law and its effects on prostitution and human trafficking. The inquiry is to be delivered during the Spring of 2010.

The Government's action plan and its measures to combat men's violence against women etc. have been criticized by some on the grounds that existing research in this field has not been taken into account. This in turn has meant that, the critics argue, this policy area and the substantial increases in the funding its different measures are not increasing the pace of change when it comes to this problem. Others would have it that the measures the present government have initiated and funded are both welcome and important and that they far outweigh those of previous governments.

Men and gender equality

This issue has been dropped by the present government.

Sexualization of the public sphere

This issue has been dropped by the present government.

¹⁰ [Skr. 2007/08:39 Action plan for combating men's violence against women, violence and oppression in the name of honour and violence in same-sex relationships](http://www.regeringen.se/download/fcd261a4.pdf?major=1&minor=110629&cn=attachmentPublDuplicator_0_attachment)
http://www.regeringen.se/download/fcd261a4.pdf?major=1&minor=110629&cn=attachmentPublDuplicator_0_attachment

Mainstreaming

The development and implementation of mainstreaming methods has been going on in Sweden since the beginning of the 1990s. All ministers have, since the mid 1990s, taken part in short introductions to the field of gender /in/equalities and gender equality policy, including the present one.

More focused initiatives to implement gender mainstreaming at the Government Offices and in state agencies began in 2004. When the previous government left office in 2006 there were 5-6 employees working with gender mainstreaming in government agencies. Today there is one person, who has a number of other tasks. In 2004 a Swedish committee of inquiry, Gender Mainstreaming Support (JämStöd), began working under a government mandate to gather information and to develop and put into practice practical methods and models for mainstreaming gender into central government activities. A large number of state employees took part of the models JämStöd developed for mainstreaming gender equality. Its results were presented in an official government report in 2007.¹¹ When the Center-right Government took office these educational activities directed to state agencies were abandoned. In 2008 the Government allocated Skr. 13 miljon to the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research for the continuation of mainstreaming activities in government agencies until December 31, 2010.¹² Programme for gender mainstreaming. Their purpose of the programme is to support governmental agencies in their work with gender mainstreaming.

The programme contains following assignments:

- develop methods for gender mainstreaming (including follow-up of JämStöds methods)
- create a forum for the exchange of experiences on gender mainstreaming
- inform about gender mainstreaming and
- create the conditions for a long term support for gender mainstreaming

With this the government seems to be back tracking and 'starting over' rather than furthering and deepening the already worked-up path of methods tested and put into practice by the Committee.¹³ Further when it comes to Gender Budgeting an analysis of the present Government's Spring budget for 2009 shows that it is not living up to its own goals.¹⁴ More stringent Government assignments to government agencies, evaluations and sanctions are not among the Government's measures – event though it sees gender mainstreaming as its main strategy for bringing about gender equality.

The same can be said for gender mainstreaming activities in local authorities and county councils. Rather than applying the knowledge already acquired through previous government initiatives the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality has transferred approximately SEK 125 million to the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) to be distributed between 2008-2010 to projects in county and municipal organizations to develop and implement gender mainstreaming. This funding is of course particularly welcomed by femocrats and others interested in the furthering of this strategy at their places of work. And – given this as well as previous governments hesitancy in promoting the gender mainstreaming

¹¹ <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/08/19/82/3532cd34.pdf>

¹² The secretariat is a state financed national secretariat for research information and dissemination and co-ordination as one of its main purposes. <http://www.genus.se/About+the+Secretariat/Commission/>

¹³ Another example of this kind of backtracking is found in a mainstreaming activity presented in 'KRUS' - a state educational organization for civil service employees – in Swedish only: <http://www.krus.nu/staten-leder-jamt/utbildning-och-moten/kommande-arrangemang-och-kurser/kunskapsdag-om-jamstalldhet/>

¹⁴ Osika, I. and Anna Klerby (2009) *Kulissen kvar i det jämställda Sverige? – En feministisk analys av vårbudgeten 2009*, Sveriges Kvinnolobby, Stockholm
(<http://www.sverigeskvinnolobby.se/home/index.asp?sid=2357&mid=1> – as per 2009.08.29)

strategy by initiating more formal and stringent measures – it is a welcome addition. However the question is if it is the best way to use tax-payers money.

Other fields

Examples of other initiatives that have been allocated funding include a research programme on women's health (SEK 30 million annually 2008-2010), program to promote women's entrepreneurship (SEK 100 million annually 2007-2009), research on women's entrepreneurship (SEK 10 million annually 2007-2009), program on women's career development (SEK 17 million), the establishment of a delegation to promote gender equality in primary education (SEK 110 million) and a similar delegation for higher education (SEK 60 million)..

Government Funds to Women's Organizations and Gender Equality Projects

The Government has assigned to the Swedish National Board of Youth Affairs the distribution of funds to:

Women's organizations SEK 28 million annually.

Gender equality projects SEK 6,9 annually.

Gender equality in minority group organizations SEK 6,5 until 2010.

The political parties women's organizations SEK 15 million annually since 2008.

The funding of these organizations and activities, previously located in the administrative unit for gender equality, are, as in the past, important. However it is an open question if this agency has the competence required for this assignment – and in extension if it is an efficient way of using tax payers money.

Gender Equality Legislation and Monitoring Agency

New anti-discrimination legislation covering all discrimination grounds was passed in 2005, before the election of the new Government. The Ombudsman for gender equality (JämO), among others, was critical of this reform and proposed that gender have an Act of its own. However, there was consensus across party lines regarding this reform. As of January 1, 2009 the new Act entered into force (Swedish Code of Statutes 2008:567). This Act includes all other Acts on discrimination. These were sex, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, disability sexual orientation. Two ***additional grounds*** of discrimination have been added; transgender identity or expression and age. Protection against discrimination has been extended to ***new areas*** of society. The new Discrimination Ombudsman Agency, established on January 1 this year and still in flux, is organized in line with these areas (labour market, education and other societal areas) rather than according to, as previously, grounds of discrimination (gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability etc.).

Gender in the new Anti-Discrimination Act.

There have been several changes in the new Act regarding gender. Similarly to the previous Act the new Act prohibits discrimination (anti-discrimination) and, importantly, stipulates that organizations work actively to promote gender equality at their places of work (pro-active measures to increase vertical and horizontal gender integration, do away with wage discrepancies based on gender, take a positive stance to those on parental-leave and promote the take-out of father's parental leave, work to prevent sexual harassment and harassment).

The former Act on Equality between Women and Men in the Labour Market was **gender neutral** in its formulation. There was however a leading paragraph that stipulated that the Act's objective was aimed first and foremost at improving the conditions of women. This paragraph has been removed, which means that the new Act is gender neutral in its entirety. **Anti-discrimination stipulations are more stringent** in the new Act, which means that the legal protection of individuals against discrimination has been strengthened. In addition **finer** are to be increased against those who do not comply with the new Act and **compensation** increased to those who are discriminated against according to the new Gender Equality Minister.¹⁵

The Acts **pro-active measures have been weakened**. The former Act stipulated that all employers with ten or more employees were obligated to actively pursue gender equality at their places of work. They were to draw up goal oriented gender equality plans with stated objectives and initiatives, which were to be followed-up on a yearly basis. In the new Act only employers with 25 employees are obligated to have and follow-up gender equality plans. They are no longer obligated to this on a yearly basis but instead every three years. Instead employers are *urged* to work promote gender equality at their places of work.

Inquiry on pro-active measures

An inquiry is investigating the effects of the provisions on pro-active measures in anti-discrimination legislation. It includes considering how employer requirements for active measures can be made clearer and linked to effective sanctions. It is also investigating whether the requirements for active measures be extended to other grounds of discrimination and areas of society. It is to deliver its report in the fall/winter of 2009.

The Equality Ombudsman

The Equality Ombudsman replaces the prior Ombud agencies for the different discrimination grounds, including JämO which was responsible for gender issues. The responsibilities of the new agency include activities to prevent discrimination, the examination of complaints regarding discrimination and harassment, and to assess whether higher education institutions and schools comply with the Discrimination Act's requirements on measures for preventing discrimination. (What about non-compliance with pro-active regulations directed to work organizations? What about follow-up initiatives regarding employers obligations to actively pursue gender equality at their places of work? The previous Ombudsman – JämO – was responsible for this as well as to in different ways follow-up employers' compliance with the regulations on pro-active measures. The follow-up part of this agency's responsibilities had grown with additional resources and personnel. It is unclear today where the responsibility for or extent of this steering instrument will be placed.)

Conflicts concerning discrimination on the labour market are, as before, dealt with by **the Labour Board**.

Conflicts regarding discrimination in other societal areas are dealt with in a **new monitoring agency**, The Board against Discrimination.

¹⁵ 'Den som diskrimineras kommer att ersättas', DN, 2008.01.28

SWOT-analysis of Gender Equality Policy Developments after the 2006 election

Internal factors

Strengths

- A ministry for gender equality policy has been established.
- The allocation of funds for gender equality measures was ten-folded – from approximately 40 million Swedish kronor to 400 million annually (Euros – 4 to 40 million).
- The rather extensive gender equality policy goals decided upon in parliament have not been formally altered.
- Men's violence against women is a Government priority. Increased funding has been allocated to NGOs and women shelter organizations and to increasing the awareness and knowledge of officials and employees in various public sectors.
- Substantial sums have been allocated to gender mainstreaming projects in the public sector.
- The Anti-Discrimination Act has been extended to new fields – age and sexual identity.
- The Act has been strengthened in regard to the discrimination of individuals.

Weaknesses

- The Minister of Gender Equality has not profiled herself positively on gender equality issues. She has further taken a rather suspicious position of gender research and views gender equality issues from a more market-oriented perspective than previous governments.
- The personnel at the Division of Gender Equality has been reduced and several employees with many years of experience and competence in the field have been pressured to leave.
- The distribution of large amounts of government funding has been allocated to agencies with limited knowledge of gender equality issues.
- Prioritized areas on the previous government's agenda have been dropped namely; sexualization of the public sphere and men and gender equality.
- The present Government has not initiated any formal steering measures to bring about mainstreaming in the ministry, government agencies and local authorities. There has been a back-track when it comes to the implementation of mainstreaming measures in the cabinet and in government agencies.
- The Anti-Discrimination Act is gender neutral and gender is viewed as one of many forms of discrimination. The stipulations on employers to engage in activities to prevent discrimination and work towards gender equality have been weakened.

External factors

Opportunities

- The media still covers many gender equality issues. Men's violence against women as well as issues concerning women's representation on boards and elite positions in the private sector are two issues that are raised more regularly.
- The chair of the Social Democratic Party has notified that gender equality issues will be high on the list of priorities in the next election.
- Working toward gender equality is still important among the general public.
- International views of Sweden's gender equality progress is a pressuring factor.

Threats

- There has been a substantial increase in anti-feminist views in the media – in particular in the two major newspapers.
- The outcome of the elections in 2010 may see the present Government re-elected.
- Increasing unemployment may impact negatively on public views of gender equality.