



Summary

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Gender mainstreaming integration policy

– An unused tool

Summary

The objective of integration policy is to achieve equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, regardless of ethnic and cultural background. The Riksdag Committee on the Labour Market has on several occasions stressed the importance of work and being able to provide for yourself. For example, in 2008 the Committee stated that “education, work and thereby the opportunity to provide for oneself is essential for matters such as an individual’s housing, democratic participation and access to culture and leisure”.

The gender equality policy objectives set out that women and men shall both have the same power to shape society and their own lives. An interim objective is for women and men to have equal opportunities and conditions for paid work that grants economic independence throughout their life. In 1994, the Riksdag decided that gender mainstreaming is the principal strategy for achieving these objectives, and this has been the case ever since. Gender mainstreaming entails the inclusion of a gender equality perspective in all stages of decision-making.

Nevertheless, the labour participation rate for foreign-born women is considerably lower than for women born in Sweden, foreign-born men and men born in Sweden. In 2015, the Swedish National Audit Office (Swedish NAO) noted that despite the fact that one of the aims of the Government’s establishment reform was to improve the conditions for women’s participation in labour market-related

programmes, this had not been achieved to any greater extent. Furthermore, in 2016 the OECD concluded that Sweden needs to develop initiatives to ensure that foreign-born women to a greater extent are established in the labour market.

All in all, this means that integration and labour market policy needs to be described and analysed with respect to its consequences for both women and men. This also means that initiatives may need to be designed differently to provide the conditions necessary for equal and effective support to women and men in their pursuit of work and providing for themselves.

In light of the above, the Swedish NAO assesses that it is important to audit *whether the Government's integration policy has applied gender mainstreaming and has thereby provided conditions for equal and effective support*. This audit was based on document studies of legal documents and the Government's policy documents for the Swedish Public Employment Service. The audit refers to the budget years 2009–2018 and examines whether the documents' descriptive, analysing and forward-looking components have clearly applied gender mainstreaming.

Audit findings

Although integration has been a high priority and knowledge of large gender differences has existed for a long time, the Swedish NAO shows that the audited documents have not been sufficiently gender mainstreamed. The Swedish NAO's main audit results are described below, which also form the basis for the two recommendations submitted to the Government.

Large persistent gender differences

The gender disaggregated descriptions presented by the Government provide an image of relatively large gender differences among foreign-born persons, both in terms of labour market participation in general and in terms of the outcome of the policy pursued. The gender differences that emerge are often to the detriment of women, from an integration perspective, such as a weaker labour market connection, lower participation rates in integration policy initiatives and poorer outcome of the initiatives.

As part of the audit, the Swedish NAO has also examined labour market participation among refugees and their families five years after their arrival to Sweden. Women and men in this group have previously been covered by establishment initiatives for newly arrived refugees and their families (previously called introduction initiatives), but at the time of measurement, they were only covered by the general policy. The results show that the proportion of refugees and family members who are women who neither work nor study is larger than in the corresponding group of men. Furthermore, this gender gap increased somewhat between 2005 and 2015. Among people born in Sweden who neither work nor

study there is also a gender gap, although it is considerably smaller and has, instead, narrowed between the measurements.

Gender disaggregated statistics are reported, but more analysis is needed

Although gender mainstreaming has been the principal strategy for implementing gender equality policy since 1994, the Swedish NAO notes that only from 2015, mainly in financial plans and guidelines for economic policy, does the Government specify that a gender quality perspective is to inform all Government policy. This shift is also evident in the governance of the Swedish Public Employment Service, where the Government reintroduces requirements that the activities are to be designed to promote diversity and equality.

In the section on integration and labour market in the Government's Budget Bills, progress is varied in terms of gender mainstreaming the descriptions, the analysis and the forward-looking components. From 2015, the Government took gender into account to a greater extent in its descriptions, identified challenges, and ambitions. However, although the descriptions often portray large gender differences, even after 2015 these are to a large extent left without any explanatory analysis. On the other hand, in the large majority of the audited documents, the Government pinpoints risk factors for weak integration and labour market participation. This concerns, for example, short education, weak knowledge of the Swedish language, a limited work-related network, region of birth, or disability. However, there is no analysis of the significance of these factors in explaining gender differences in labour market connection. With the exception of recent years, there has been a lack of analysis about whether there are further explanations for the gender differences, for example women assuming greater caregiving responsibilities, and gender norms and stereotypes.

During the period audited, the Government took many initiatives both with regard to the policy for newly arrived immigrants and within the general labour market policy. Up to and including 2017, with few exceptions the initiatives are described without addressing the underlying gender differences and how the initiatives are expected to contribute to labour market participation for both women and men. It is only in the integration section of the 2018 Budget Bill that the Government presents a number of initiatives that directly concern foreign-born women with a weak labour market connection.

In light of the audit findings, the Swedish NAO recommends that the Government:

- continue to develop gender mainstreaming in the integration and labour market area. As a first step, the focus should lie on analysing the reasons for

gender differences, so that conditions for equal and effective support for integration can be advanced for foreign-born women and men.

Not possible to follow policy for foreign-born women and men who are not newly arrived

Gender disaggregated statistics are a prerequisite for the ability to analyse the outcome of various measures for women and men. This is why, for the purpose of following up policy of establishment for newly arrived refugees and their families, the statistical data needs to be broken down by gender. However, when it comes to people born abroad who are not newly arrived, both a division by gender and by people born in Sweden and those born abroad is needed. Since the policy to promote their integration also applies to people born in Sweden, double classifications are needed to understand how the policy performs specifically for foreign-born women and men.

The Swedish NAO notes that at no time during the period audited is it possible to deduce in the Government's labour market section anything about participation in initiatives or their outcome for foreign-born women and men who are not newly arrived refugees or their families. This means that the Government's presentation does not give a sufficiently good picture of the effect of the general labour market policy for foreign-born women and men. In light of the audit findings, the Swedish NAO recommends that the Government:

- report and analyse the results of the labour market policy to make it possible to follow the outcome of the policy for all foreign-born women and men.