

About what must not happen – a roadmap

The Swedish Government's action plan to protect children from human trafficking, exploitation and sexual abuse, 2016–2018 – English summary



Human trafficking is one of the most serious forms of organised crime and a modern form of slavery. It is a crime against human rights and work to combat it has a very strong gender equality and children's rights perspective. Combatting human trafficking, exploitation and sexual abuse of all children, irrespective of gender, gender identity or gender expression, is an issue of the utmost priority for the Swedish Government.

The Government's children's rights policy is based on the rights of the child as expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The overall goals of Sweden's policy on children's rights are that children and young people should be respected and given opportunities for development and security as well as participation and influence.

In general, Sweden is a good country for children to grow up in. However, much remains to be done. Children's rights are being infringed every day. Protection against human trafficking, exploitation and sexual abuse is crucial for children being able to experience a good upbringing.

Sweden's Government is also a feminist government. This means that a gender equality perspective is paramount in our efforts to protect every girl and boy against these infringements of their rights.

We also constantly seek, wherever possible, to put human trafficking and child protection on the international political agenda. We also have a responsibility to protect children from sexual abuse or exploitation committed by people who are resident in our country, no matter where in the world these acts may take place.

To continue this absolutely essential work to protect children from human trafficking, exploitation and sexual abuse, the Government has today decided on an updated and strengthened action plan for 2016–2018.

Stockholm, 22 June 2016

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Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality

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Combatting human trafficking, and the exploitation and sexual abuse of all children is of the utmost priority to the Government. The aim is for no child to be a victim of these crimes. For this reason, on 22 June 2016 the Government decided on a new action plan to protect children from human trafficking, exploitation and sexual abuse.

The action plan continues the previous action plan of 2014–2015. The new action plan contains measures for the period 2016–2018. These measures will help to attain the goals of the 2030 Agenda, which involve eliminating abuse, exploitation, human trafficking and all forms of violence or torture against children and abolishing all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including human trafficking, sexual abuse and other types of exploitation.

The Government's children's rights policy is based on the rights of the child as expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The right of the child to security and appropriate protection means that the Government and government agencies have an obligation to create circumstances in which no child is the victim of human trafficking, exploitation or sexual abuse.

The measures in the action plan also contribute towards the strategic work that the Government is carrying out to reach the gender equality policy target of eliminating male violence against women, where girls and boys are to have the same rights and opportunities to physical integrity.

The action plan reflects the Government's ambition to also be a driving force on these issues on the international stage. Sweden must be a strong voice in the world for gender equality and human rights.

In the light of this, the Government's aim with the action plan is to prevent these infringements and effectively protect children, bring perpetrators to justice and give those children, irrespective of their gender, who have been the victims of these crimes the support and protection they need. The action plan therefore contains a number of measures in these areas.

Central measures implemented

In the period 2014–2015, the Government has taken several measures with the aim of improving the protection of children from human trafficking, exploitation and sexual abuse. The most central of these concerns:

- Ongoing inquiries reviewing current legislation.
- Increased coordination and collaboration between agencies and other actors.
- Heightened awareness of the vulnerability of children on the part of professionals, the general public and children themselves.
- Strengthening children's knowledge of their rights.
- International collaboration, agreements and conventions.

Work to prevent children becoming victims must continue

The human trafficking, exploitation and sexual abuse of children must be prevented and efforts to protect children must continue. Many measures have been put in place but a number of challenges remain. These partly involve:

- Early identification of children and young people at risk of becoming victims of these crimes.
- The vulnerability of children and young people online.
- Continuing to disseminate knowledge and improve expertise amongst professionals.
- Appropriate and effective support when children are the victims of crime.
- Increasing children's own agency and strengthening children's awareness of their rights.
- Risks of abuse and human trafficking in children relating to unaccompanied child migrants.
- Developing support and help for adults who abuse children.

Measures in the action plan

The Government presents a number of measures with the aim of preventing crime, protecting and supporting children and creating circumstances in which perpetrators can efficiently be brought to justice. The measures must be characterised by a children's rights perspective and a gender equality perspective and also take into account an LGBT perspective.

Goals of the proposed measures:

- No children to be the victims of human trafficking.
- No children to be the victims of sexual abuse or exploitation, either in Sweden or through travel and tourism.
- All children who have been the victims of human trafficking, sexual abuse or exploitation to receive the protection and support they need.
- Promoting children's awareness of their right to be protected from abuse and exploitation and increasing their opportunities to counteract their vulnerability themselves.

The measures must also contribute to:

- increasing the efficiency and coordination of the government agencies affected (measures 1–3)
- constantly developing knowledge and skills in this areas (measures 4–13)
- continuously preventing and prosecuting crimes against children (measures 14–20)
- giving children the support they need (measures 21–23)

Measures to improve efficiency and coordination

1. Stronger national coordination and collaboration against human trafficking in children

Stockholm County Administrative Board will continue its task of coordinating the dissemination and implementation of knowledge and methods aimed at providing support and protection to children against human trafficking and exploitation. This support will primarily be geared towards municipalities, county councils, county administrative boards and agencies as they perform their work. Recipients may also include other actors such as non-governmental organisations.

Another aspect of this task is working to continue to develop cooperation with taxi companies and the hotel industry to increase the chance of identifying children being exploited for various purposes. This remit must also interconnect with the County Administrative Board's other national mandates on children who disappear and on vulnerable EU citizens.

The measure must lead to improving the skills of the agencies concerned when it comes to safeguarding children's rights by identifying and reporting cases where children may be the victims of human trafficking and/or other forms of exploitation or crime.

2. Appointing an ambassador for international cooperation against human trafficking

Combatting human trafficking demands effective international collaboration. For this reason, the Government has appointed an ambassador for work to combat human trafficking. The ambassador is to work proactively, raise the issue on the international agenda and help to reinforce international efforts against human trafficking.

The measure means that the ambassador will work to ensure that Sweden's contribution towards international efforts to counteract human trafficking is reinforced, and that international experiences are passed on to Swedish agencies so that any victims receive the protection and support that they need in Sweden.

3. Developing Nordic cooperation against the exploitation of children

The cooperation of the Nordic governments and their agencies on questions concerning the exploitation or abuse of children should be strengthened further. Developments in communication technology create new risks of abuse of children. These cross-border threats partly need to be handled through strengthened cooperation between the Nordic countries. The Government will therefore arrange and participate in joint meetings focusing on these issues. The first meeting will take place in autumn 2016 and focuses on children's vulnerability on the internet.

The measure will promote greater coordination within the Nordic region on governmental and agency initiatives to prevent crimes against children online.

Measures to increase knowledge and expertise

4. More knowledge on unaccompanied child migrants who disappear

The Children's Ombudsman has been commissioned to listen to children who have returned after having absconded, to understand more about the circumstances surrounding their disappearance. The Children's Ombudsman will summarise the information that emerges from the dialogue with these children in a report that will be disseminated to agencies, municipalities and other actors concerned, working with or for unaccompanied child migrants.

In providing better knowledge, the measure will give the agencies concerned underlying data for increasing the protection of these children.

5. Study of particularly vulnerable groups of children

The Government will commission the Stockholm County Administrative Board to carry out an in-depth study of the groups of children judged to be particularly vulnerable, for example unaccompanied child asylum seekers, unaccompanied child migrants who are not applying for asylum and children whose parents or guardians are victims of human trafficking.

The measure will help to improve knowledge of the living conditions of groups of particularly vulnerable children in Sweden. This knowledge will form a basis for efficient protection and support measures on the part of agencies, municipalities and county councils.

6. Support to social services in investigating transnational cases

The Government will commission the National Board of Health and Welfare to produce an information brochure for social services about investigating children's need for support and protection in transnational cases where children are victims of human trafficking and/or sexual abuse. The information brochure is to be spread to the profession.

The measure is to lead to greater support in the form of knowledge for social services when investigating children's need for protection in cases with a transnational dimension.

7. Knowledge-based support to social services and the health and care sector for conversations with children

The Government will commission the National Board of Health and Welfare to produce knowledge-based support for social services and the health and care sector for conversations with children, with the aim of better preparing them to also handle conversations with children who may have been the victims of sexual abuse or human trafficking. This support is to be disseminated to the profession.

The measure must contribute towards a higher rate of identification of cases where children have been the victims of various forms of abuse and contribute towards greater expertise in social services' and the health and care sector's conversations with children in vulnerable situations.

8. Talks with Swedish faith communities on child protection

Sweden's faith communities often run activities that involve children, young people and their parents. Via the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the Government intends to initiate a dialogue with different faith communities about their experiences when it comes to violence towards and abuse of children.

The measure will identify experiences from, and the potential of, faith communities in working to increase the protection of children from violence, abuse and exploitation.

9. Dialogue with foreign agencies on the theme of sexual exploitation of children

In dialogue with Swedish foreign missions, the Government will work to help them to develop procedures and a readiness to draw attention to questions of child sexual exploitation, and any involvement of Swedish citizens in this abuse. The foreign missions must be able to monitor how well the countries are complying with the bilateral agreements on collaboration to combat gross criminality in cases where such

agreements have been entered into between Sweden and the country in question.

The dialogues must lead to greater attention being paid to sexual exploitation of children in conjunction with travel and tourism and an improved readiness to handle cases in which Swedish citizens are involved.

10. Dialogues on the theme of combatting exploitation of children in conjunction with travel and tourism

The Government intends to invite participants to additional dialogues focusing on combatting the exploitation of children in conjunction with travel and tourism with, for example, the Swedish Police, prosecutors, judges, Swedish travel agencies and voluntary organisations, all of which have different experiences of the actual conditions surrounding the sexual exploitation of children in conjunction with travel and tourism and can provide knowledge of the circumstances that make it easier or more difficult for abusers to be identified and brought to justice. Particular attention should be drawn to the risks of exploitation of children linked to orphanage tourism and voluntourism.

The dialogues must provide additional knowledge to actors involved in the work to highlight and reduce the risks of sexual exploitation of children abroad, and help ensure greater coordination between these actors.

11. Dialogues on the theme of vulnerability of children and young people in social media

The Government will continue with its annual dialogues with the Swedish Media Council, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, civil society organisations and private actors on the theme of the vulnerability of girls and boys in social media.

The dialogues must help ensure that the Government's measures can be adapted to how the risk of vulnerability changes in social media and seek to find opportunities to increase the protection of children against harmful contacts and sexual exploitation in social media.

12. Knowledge bank of police methods and ways of working to prevent repeated violence

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) has been commissioned to produce a knowledge bank on police methods and ways of working to prevent repeated violence against children and adults in intimate relationships. On the basis of this data, the Government will commission the Swedish Police to develop preventive work in this area.

In the long term, the knowledge bank will improve the work of the police to prevent violence in intimate relationships, and so also prevent children being exposed to repeated violence or being forced to witness repeated violence in their immediate environment.

13. Continued exchanges of experiences between the Baltic countries

The National Board of Health and Welfare will continue to represent Sweden in the Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk (EGCC) within the framework of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, which involves ongoing exchanges of experience between specialists involved in protecting and supporting vulnerable children in the Baltic Sea states. Sweden will chair the EGCC in 2017, which means we will need to raise the level of our ambitions.

The aim is for Sweden to be a driving actor in Baltic Sea cooperation.

Measures to prevent abuse and crimes against children

14. Support and treatment for people who risk committing crimes against children

The Government continues to contribute financially towards work to prevent sexual crimes against children run by the Centre for Andrology and Sexual Medicine (CASM) at Karolinska Hospital. The centre works to prevent sexual abuse by treating people who engage in behaviours that put them at risk of committing sexual abuse, partly through the national PrevenTell helpline. People with a pattern of sexual attraction to children are particularly prioritised. The centre will also develop and carry out a training programme directed towards relevant professional groups for treating people in risk categories who carry out, or risk carrying out, sexually violent acts – with the aim of reducing the risk of reoffending.

The aim is for the individuals who want help in dealing with their sexual attraction so as not to abuse children to receive the support they need, so helping to prevent sex crimes against children.

15. Examination of cases of suspected human trafficking of children in 2015–2016

The Government has commissioned Stockholm County Administrative Board to carry out a systematic examination of all police reports of suspected human trafficking of children in 2015–2016, and to subsequently carry out an in-depth study of about ten selected cases.

The main purpose of this examination is to attempt to identify why so few preliminary investigations into suspected human trafficking result in prosecution, and to identify which parts of the process can and should in particular be strengthened. Furthermore, the purpose is to describe what different cases may look like, identify best practice in which the child has been given sufficient support at every step of the process and identify areas in which protection can be further strengthened. The examination is to identify success factors in investigations and develop models for how best to prevent human trafficking in children.

16. Study on young people who have been the victims of online sexual abuse

The Government grants funding to the Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden to carry out a study into children who have been the victims of sexual abuse via the internet. The aim is to expand knowledge of the consequences for children and young people of sexual abuse online.

17. Improving the capacity of the Swedish Police to combat sex crimes against children

The Swedish Police will be commissioned to propose measures to combat different types of sex crimes against children. This includes internet-related sex crimes against children and documentation of sexual abuse via the internet, child sex tourism, children who sell sex, human trafficking seeking to exploit children in prostitution, and sexual blackmail as a result of adults' contact with children with a sexual purpose.

The measures will help the Swedish Police to improve its ability to discover, investigate, obstruct and prevent sex crimes against children, to identify victims and perpetrators of these crimes, and to improve international collaboration.

18. Continued training for prosecutors in investigating human trafficking crimes

Through continued training for prosecutors in investigating human trafficking crimes, the identification of human trafficking crimes can be improved. During 2016 the Swedish Prosecution Authority will be working on the project "Crimes against children, violence in intimate relationships and sex crimes against adults – a developed best practice". The project seeks to manage, develop and continue to implement this approach. Questions of human trafficking and sexual abuse of children are included in the authority's prosecutor training. The Swedish Prosecution Authority carefully monitors the issue and assesses the need for future training in this field.

The aim is to develop the skills of prosecutors regarding human trafficking and sexual abuse.

19. Information to prevent sexual exploitation of children relating to travel, orphanage tourism or voluntourism

Stockholm County Administrative Board has been commissioned to help to inform the public of the existence of sexual exploitation of children in conjunction with travel and tourism. This abuse is largely also criminalised abroad and the general public must therefore be encouraged to report suspected abuse that comes to their knowledge. The general public must also be informed of the existence of exploitation and human trafficking in children in connection with orphanage tourism and voluntary work in other countries, and how this can contribute to increasing the vulnerability of children.

The measure will contribute towards work to reduce the vulnerability of children to human trafficking, exploitation and sexual abuse outside Sweden. Awareness will also increase regarding the fact that exploitation and human trafficking of children may also arise in conjunction with orphanage tourism and voluntourism.

20. Continued development of bilateral agreements

In 2016 the Government plans to enter into new bilateral agreements with other countries with the aim of combatting gross criminality, including human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children.

These agreements will encourage collaboration on combatting criminality in these areas.

Measures to improve support for children

21. A model for better support and treatment for children who have been the victims of sexual abuse and physical violence

The Government has granted the Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden funding for a development project on the principle that all children who have been the victims of sexual abuse and/or physical violence have the right to an assessment and the right to support and rehabilitation according to need. The model will support providing good information to children and parents, a functioning care chain and the opportunity for children and parents to seek and obtain support and treatment when the need arises. Particular attention should be paid to children with disabilities, as international reports show that they are more frequently the victims of violence and sexual abuse, for example, than other children.

The aim is that the model will give children who have been the victims of sexual abuse or physical violence improved opportunities for support and rehabilitation.

22. Information to children on where to turn in the event of sexual abuse

The Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden receives funding to continue to spread information to children about their rights and where they can turn if they or a friend have been the victim of sexual abuse. The existing website "dagsattprataom.se" will be made even more accessible and also translated into more languages. A guide will be drawn up on the basis of children's wishes that adults at school should be courageous enough to talk about these issues at school when the children wish to do so.

The aim is for knowledge of the children's own rights concerning sexual abuse to reach more children and for adults at school to receive support on appropriate ways of talking and asking about children's vulnerability.

23. Improved skills in safe and critical internet use

The Swedish National Agency for Education has been commissioned to produce and carry out national school development programmes. These include initiatives to strengthen digital skills in schools. In its planning,

the Swedish National Agency for Education has included in-service training for teachers and other school staff on safe and critical internet use. The initiative is planned to be available from autumn 2016.

The purpose is to help to provide children and young people with education in safe and critical use of the internet, so reducing the risk of them becoming the victims, e.g. of harmful interactions or exploitation via the internet.

Continuous follow-up and watchfulness on developments in the area

To ensure that developments and initiatives are adapted to the development taking place in these areas, the Government will continuously follow up the action plan in 2016–2018 and take additional measures where necessary.

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