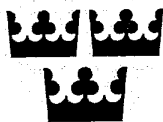
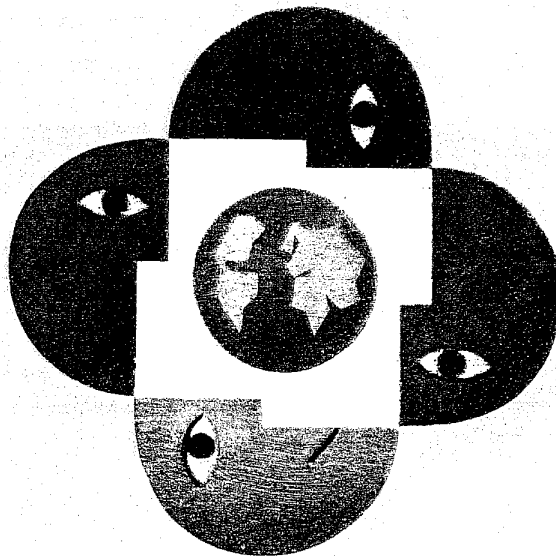


Written Communication
2001/02:83

A Swedish Human Rights
Action Plan – Summary



9 Human Rights education

9.1 General

The Government's assessment: Knowledge concerning human rights needs to be improved. It is especially important that knowledge should be disseminated concerning economic, social and cultural rights.

In the General Assembly's Resolution 49/184 of 23rd December 1994 (UN Doc. A/51/506/Add. 1 – see Annex I), the United Nations has

proclaimed the ten-year period between 1995 and 2004 as the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. States have been called upon during this decade to prepare and implement national plans for human rights education. The purpose of a National Action Plan for human rights education shall, according to the United Nations, be among other things to promote respect for and protection of all human rights by providing human rights education for all members of society.

Reasons for the Government's assessment: Human rights education is a way of preventing human rights from being violated. Knowledge makes people more aware of their rights. It is important that human rights should be given a more conspicuous position on the political agenda. It is also important that human rights education should not only convey factual knowledge but provide scope, for example, for analysis, reflection and discussion concerning the way in which rights are interlinked.

Knowledge of human rights is needed in many sectors of Swedish society. The Government therefore attaches importance to strengthening knowledge of human rights within for example national authorities. The new national authority, Forum for Living History, which the Government intends setting up with effect from 2003, will among other things have a part to play in certain initiatives presented in this Action Plan.

A number of authorities and organisations in Sweden today are already actively concerned with human rights education, and the Swedish education system offers several opportunities for studies in this field. The UNESCO Executive Board, for example, has pressed the issue of human rights education in Sweden, and for the past three years this has been a top priority field with the Swedish Commission for UNESCO, resulting among other things in the production of human rights education material. Very important work is also being done by the NGO:s where this education is concerned. The Government would like to see the educational initiatives announced in the National Action Plan proceeding in partnership with other agents, such as the non-governmental organisations, wherever possible.

The Government finds that human rights education needs to be improved and to be allotted wider scope in Swedish society. By tradition, economic, social and cultural rights have received less attention than civil and political rights. In its recommendation, made in November 2000 on the basis of Sweden's fourth report, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights encourages Sweden to raise awareness about human rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights, among state officials and the judiciary. Partly with this background in mind, it is important that the authorities dealing with issues affecting such rights should have the opportunity of education in this subject.

Mindful of the UN Resolution Concerning a Decade for Human Rights Education, the Government will in this section be presenting various measures to observe the Decade.

In this section an account is given of certain of the measures which the Government has taken or intends taking with reference to human rights education, especially in the education system, for certain specified national authorities and social insurance offices, courts of law and the

total defence system. Various subsections deal specifically with the Forum for Living History, municipalities and county councils and non-governmental organisations. Skr. 2001/02:83

9.2 Pre-school education, schools and adult education

9.2.1 Background

The democratic social assignment is one of the education system's prime tasks. As has already been observed, there is a strong and natural but complex link between democracy and human rights. Questions concerning democracy and human rights must be constantly observed in all branches of activity within the education system. Broad and constantly updated knowledge of these matters is needed in order to strengthen the basic values underpinning our democracy.

Human rights primarily concern relations between the state and the individual. The human rights of the individual are to be guaranteed by the state, not by other individuals, but the state has a duty to prevent individuals violating the rights of other individuals, and it can also be held accountable if it fails to intervene or otherwise prevent violations. It goes without saying, however, that human rights education is intended to teach all persons to respect each other and not to subject each other to humiliating treatment.

Pre-school education, schools, out-of-school centres and adult education have considerable potential for inculcating among children, young persons and adults an understanding of the principles of democracy and respect for other people. Efforts to counteract and prevent discrimination, racism xenophobia and violence are important tasks for the education system. This means conveying a knowledge of Sweden's commitments and the meaning of democracy and human rights, and also translating that knowledge into practical action. Thus the mere transmission of knowledge concerning basic democratic values and human rights is not enough. In addition, teaching must be conducted on a democratic basis and must prepare pupils and students for active participation in the life of the community.

The values on which the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights is founded are the principles of universal human equality of dignity and rights. This is especially highlighted in the steering documents for the education system. The curricula for the compulsory school system, the pre-school class and the out-of-school centre, and also for non-compulsory schools, begin with a chapter laying down that activities shall build on democratic foundations and shall be framed in keeping with basic democratic values. The curricula are based on the Education Act (1985:1100). All three of them begin with a section dealing with the basic values, mission and tasks of the various forms of activity. The wording of the curricula is based on fundamental principles concerning human rights and democracy. All persons active in schools shall therefore promote respect for every person's individual worth and respect for our common environment. The task of schools is to communicate, articulate and establish the basic values on which the life of our society is

founded. Those values comprise the sanctity of human life, the liberty and integrity of the individual, the equal dignity of all human beings, the equality of women and men and solidarity with the weak and disadvantaged. All persons shall be treated on equal terms and with respect. All types of victimisation and other humiliating treatment shall therefore be actively combated, and xenophobia and intolerance shall be counteracted by means of knowledge, open discussion and active initiatives.

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The curricula also contain goals and guidelines concerning the pupils' responsibilities and influence. The foundations of children's understanding of the nature of democratic thinking are laid in pre-school education. All pupils shall be included in the democratic principles of being able to exert influence, assuming responsibility and being a participant. The pupils' educational and social development presupposes their assumption of progressively greater responsibility for their own work and the school environment. The curricula make the head teacher specially responsible for school staff being apprised of international agreements which Sweden has pledged itself to observe in education.

The compulsory school syllabus for social subjects lays down that Swedish law, fundamental rights and freedoms and international agreements on human rights, such as the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, shall be observed and shall form a basis of reflection concerning membership of a national and international community.

Great changes were made to the education system during the 1990s. Responsibility for schools was decentralised through a radical reapportionment of responsibilities between national and local government. The individual school became a goal-reference, performance-driven activity. School mandators (mostly municipalities) are responsible for the achievement of the goals defined by the Government and Riksdag. They have extensive liberty to decide how school activities are to be structured and organised. Every municipality is required to draw up an education plan for schools, indicating the measures which the municipality intends taking in pursuit of the goals defined for schools and how results are to be evaluated.

9.2.2 Measures for the promotion of democracy and human rights

Skr. 2001/02:83

Concise description

– The Government attaches great importance to opportunity and space being provided for competence development on the subject of human rights.

– The Government's initiatives in the basic values context are continuing and, for the period between July 2000 and June 2003, for example, include a MSEK 12 scheme for supporting and deepening school activities with reference to basic values.

– As part of the educational co-operation occurring under the aegis of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Government is participating in a project on basic values and democracy and also concerning victimisation and violence.

– In July 2001 the Government reserved MSEK 9.2 for the development of courses for serving and trainee teachers on the Holocaust and contemporary history.

This section deals with the following issues: basic values and school responsibilities, time for reflection, a national centre for basic values and the Nordic Council of Ministers. An account is also given of the Basic Values project, the revised compulsory and upper secondary school syllabi, the long-term plan of the National Agency for Education for work relating to basic values, and scrutiny of history teaching in schools. Finally the section deals with competence development, pre-school education, continuing basic values work within the Ministry of Education, assignments to the National Agency for Education concerning racism, ethnic discrimination, sexual harassment, homophobia and gender-related victimisation, an anti-victimisation campaign, legislative issues, curricular review, a review of upper secondary schooling, and an augmented dialogue with municipalities for the purpose of development and evaluation and scrutiny.

9.3 Higher education

9.3.1 Background

In this section the Government presents its views on a number of matters relating to higher education and the role of research in relation to human rights.

It is important that higher education establishments should continue to assume responsibility for transmitting knowledge in the field of human rights. It is also important that knowledge concerning human rights and their implementation should be disseminated in the community. Higher education often sets standards for society at large. The values and attitude occurring in the education sector are those which will prevail in policy-making parts of the society of tomorrow, and higher education and research therefore have an important task to perform in securing the survival of human rights and a democratic development of society in general.

Higher education plays an important part in the development of democracy and for understanding of and respect for human rights. In successive proposals the Government has endeavoured to strengthen democracy by giving persons active in higher education the right of participation in the development of education and research. Skr. 2001/02:83

9.3.2 Measures for the promotion of democracy and human rights

Concise description

- The Government has given special funding support to courses on human rights and democracy at the Stockholm Theological College.
- The Government has resolved to introduce a new speciality for the Master's degree, a "broad-based Master's degree", as part of the degree structure enacted through the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) and other statutory instruments.
- Several different universities and colleges provide human rights education, e.g. the Raoul Wallenberg Institute at the Faculty of Law, Lund University, the Universities of Göteborg (Gothenburg), Linköping and Uppsala, and Kalmar University College.

The Government's assessment

- The new focus defined for the Master's degree in the Degree Ordinance should make it easier for higher education establishments also to provide in-depth continuation courses in interdisciplinary subjects, e.g. human rights.
- The Government intends supporting a summer school on human rights and democracy within the framework of the Öresund University.
- The Government intends supporting in-service and further education for certain occupational categories on the subject of human rights.
- The Government wishes to encourage higher education establishments to analyse the need for and feasibility of building up a network on human rights research. The structure of both network and co-operation should be worked out by the parties themselves.

Reasons for the Government's assessment: A total of 80,000 student equivalents was added to the higher education system between 1997 and 2001. As a result, increasing numbers of people have gained access to higher education and the social and ethnic mix of the student population has changed accordingly. Utilising this new diversity among students and their perspective so as to achieve a growth of cultural and social understanding in society presents an exciting challenge to seats of learning in Sweden. In 1999 the Government appointed a Commission to investigate ways in which diversity could be increased and promoted at higher education establishments in Sweden. A number of proposals on the subject, presented in the Government's Bill *Den öppna högskolan* (The Open Higher Education System, Prop. 2001/02:15), were based

partly on the report by this Commission, entitled (in Swedish) Diversity in Higher Education (SOU 2000:47). Skr. 2001/02:83

Another important Government Bill, entitled (in Swedish) Student Participation and Qualitative Development in Higher Education (Prop. 1999/2000:28), is based on students being obvious partners for co-operation and has given them greater formal influence over their studies.

In addition, the National Agency for Higher Education, which is the supervisory authority for universities and colleges in Sweden, has carried out scrutinies of all seats of learning in the country, partly in a diversity and equal opportunities perspective.

The Government has provided special support for courses on human rights and democracy at the Stockholm Theological College.

At the New Year 1998 a special investigator was appointed to investigate and make proposals concerning higher education in democracy and human rights (U 97/4105/A 12th January 1998). Among other things, this remit included an evaluation of the democracy and human rights education which had been conducted at the Stockholm Theological College with special funding support during 1997. The remit also involved a general inventory of democracy and human rights education at the national universities and colleges and investigation of the need for more systematic and integrated education in this field. The remit, completed in the spring of 1998, resulted in the departmental memorandum *Mänskliga rättigheter – mångas skyldigheter* (Human Rights – Many People's Obligations, Ds 1998:46).

The Higher Education Act (1992:1434) lays down that all education shall rest on scientific or artistic foundations and on proven experience. The Act further stipulates that equality between women and men shall always be observed and promoted in higher education activity, and that higher education establishments in the course of their activities shall also promote understanding for other countries and international relations.

Undergraduate study programmes present a wide spectrum in terms, for example, of duration, form, content and objectives. The 1977 Higher Education Reform implied a far-reaching decentralisation, e.g. as regards funding systems and local discretion in the use of available resources. The 1993 Higher Education Reform resulted, among other things, in universities and colleges acquiring greater liberty to decide on the organisation of studies, the range of study programmes, student admissions, departmental organisation and the deployment of resources for undergraduate studies. Every higher education establishment has to decide for itself which study programmes to offer and how these are to be designed within the framework of the goals and guidelines laid down by the Government and Riksdag. The Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) indicates which degrees may be taken in basic higher education and what requirements must be met for each of them. Activities are guided by generally worded objectives. Consequently the higher education establishments themselves have to decide whether and how they wish to integrate human rights issues with teaching and research.

This section gives an account of study content, study programmes leading to employment in the public sector, the UN Convention on the

9.4 Certain specialised authorities and social insurance offices

The Government's assessment

- The Government intends commissioning a number of national authorities and social insurance offices to provide human rights education for their personnel. This education is above all to focus on human rights information retrieval.
- The Government intends instructing the Office of the Prosecutor-General, the Swedish National Economic Crimes Bureau, the National Police Board, the National Prison and Probation Administration and the National Board of Forensic Medicine to reinforce the human rights education which they provide for their personnel. This education is above all to focus on human rights information retrieval.
- The Government intends to instruct the National Rescue Services Board, the Swedish Coast Guard and the Swedish Customs Service to take account of human rights issues in their teaching.
- The Government intends instructing the Swedish Migration Board and the Aliens Appeals Board to investigate and report to the Government on measures taken with regard to personnel training concerning precedents laid down by the European Court of Human Rights and the UN-Committee Against Torture and the Conventions on which the decisions are based.
- The Government intends instructing the National Council for Quality and Development to devise human rights education programmes for persons in leading positions within national authorities.
- The Government intends arranging various series of human rights seminars for the employees of the Government Offices between 2002 and 2004.

Reasons for the Government's assessment: Chap. 1, Section 2 of the Instrument of Government requires public power to be exercised with respect for the equal dignity of all human beings and for the liberty and dignity of the individual. Knowledge of the nature of human rights and of the equal dignity of all human beings is particularly important for persons in positions of authority. Several national authorities today are already engaged in human rights education on a greater or lesser scale, while in other authorities such education is lacking. The Government particularly wishes to highlight the importance of human rights education being made available to employees in the public service.

Economic, social and cultural rights have by tradition received less attention than civil and political rights. The Government therefore considers it important that the authorities dealing with matters where economic, social and cultural rights are affected should be given the opportunity of improving knowledge of these rights among their personnel.

Human rights education is especially important for certain national authorities. During the period between 2002 and 2004, the attention of these authorities will be particularly drawn to human rights issues. A number of key authorities have already been identified, and the Government will be specially tasking them with improving the standard of knowledge among their personnel. The education is to be adapted to the activity of the authority concerned. Existing human rights education is to be evaluated if necessary. Several of the reference groups have highlighted the possibilities of distance teaching of human rights and information retrieval on the Internet as important educational sectors.

The Government intends, for example, in its appropriation warrants for 2002, to instruct a number of national authorities and social insurance offices to provide human rights education for their personnel. This education is above all to focus on human rights information retrieval. Information retrieval can, for example, refer to ways of using the Internet as a means of finding information. The authorities involved are the National Board for Youth Affairs, the National Social Insurance Board, the Medical Responsibility Board, the National Institute of Public Health, the National Board for Intercountry Adoptions, the National Agency for Education, the Sami School Board, the Sami Parliament and the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, together with all social insurance offices. In addition, the National Board of Health and Welfare has been instructed to define its role as the sectorial authority responsible for disability policy, to give an account of the way in which the child perspective and consideration of the best interests of the child have been taken into account, and also to show what steps have been taken to give effect to the action plan for gender issues.

Another important target group for education comprises the administration of justice. In its appropriation warrants for 2002, for example, the Government intends instructing the Office of the Prosecutor-General, the Swedish National Economic Crimes Bureau, the National Police Board, the National Prison and Probation Administration and the National Board of Forensic Medicine to reinforce the human rights education which they provide for their personnel. This education is above all to focus on human rights information retrieval. Existing human rights education is to be evaluated if necessary.

The Government will also be instructing the National Rescue Services Board, the Swedish Coast Guard and the Swedish Customs Service to take human rights issues into account in their teaching.

The National Migration Board and the Aliens Appeals Board are authorities which decide individual asylum cases under the Aliens Act. One of the foundations of the activities of these authorities is respect for the human rights of applicants and maintenance of efficiency and the rule of law in their handling and decision-making procedures. Both authorities are extensively active in their provision of training and their publication of handbooks and written guides to this end. The Government therefore intends giving these authorities the task of investigating and reporting to the Government on measures taken with regard to personnel training concerning precedents laid down by the European Court of Human Rights and the UN Committee Against Torture and the Conventions on which the decisions are based, so that the

Conventions will be made familiar and their practical implementation by individual handling officers facilitated. Skr. 2001/02:83

Another important target group comprises persons in leading positions within national authorities. The National Council for Quality and Development is a national authority tasked with supporting and encouraging the work of quality development and competence supply within the national administration. The structure and focus of activities are defined in close collaboration with the recipients, the Government Offices and national authorities. The Council promotes the establishment of the administrative culture and safeguards the values today characterising the Swedish government service, such as democracy, transparency, the rule of law and efficiency. The Government intends instructing the National Council for Quality and Development to devise human rights education programmes for persons in leading positions within national authorities.

Studies of the organisational aspects of human rights work within the Government Offices have shown that here too there is room for improvement where knowledge of human rights is concerned. The questionnaire surveys conducted by the Secretariat of the working group during the spring of 2001 revealed both a need and a great demand for education programmes. The Government therefore intends arranging human rights education programmes for the personnel of the Government Offices. Future programmes will be both specialised and of a more general nature. Target groups of particular importance comprise politicians, senior executives within the Government Offices and the handling officers tasked with writing and compiling the various Swedish reports to the United Nations, for example.

9.5 Courts of law

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| <p>The Government's assessment: The Government will be monitoring the initiatives taken by the National Courts Administration for the further development of its human rights education activities.</p> |
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Reasons for the Government's assessment: Knowledge of human rights is of importance in the administration of justice and elsewhere. Human rights instruction is to a varying extent included by faculties of law in undergraduate law studies. Several faculties raise human rights issues in connection with teaching, e.g. in international law, procedural law and penal law.

The incorporation of the European Convention in Swedish law augmented the need on the part of Swedish courts for education concerning the Convention's provisions. A number and variety of training programmes in this field have in fact been carried out within the judicial system. The focus on this education has primarily been on implementation of the European Convention, but various UN Conventions and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union have also been included in further training. Special one-day seminars on human rights have been arranged continuously. Human rights are included in the recurrent training undergone by judges and

room is also made for them at various judicial seminars focusing on penal law, procedural law, custodial cases, the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act, the Care of Alcoholics, Drug Abusers and Abusers of Volatile Solvents (Certain Cases) Act, etc. Human rights today are a natural component of the educational activity provided by the National Courts Administration. Meetings of the judicial authorities have highlighted the possibilities of distance teaching concerning human rights and of information retrieval on the Internet as particularly important fields for instruction. The Government will be monitoring the initiatives taken by the National Courts Administration for the further development of its human rights education activities. Skr. 2001/02:83

9.6 The total defence administration

The Government's assessment: In its dialogue with the total defence authorities concerned, the Government intends observing the work they undertake with a view to publicising and more strongly safeguarding certain particular rights and freedoms.

Reasons for the Government's assessment: Under the Total Defence and Heightened Preparedness Act (1992:1403), the total defence establishment is the activity needed in order to prepare Sweden for war. In a situation of maximum preparedness, the total defence establishment comprises all public activities which are then to be conducted. The total defence establishment comprises military activities (military defence) and civil activities (civil defence). The Total Defence International Law Ordinance (1990:12) defines the international law responsibilities of national authorities accountable to the Government. This enactment, however, only refers to humanitarian law, and not to human rights.

In this section an account is given of the Swedish Armed Forces, the National Defence College and the Swedish Agency for Civil Emergency Planning.

The Government's assessment

- The Government intends commissioning the production of material on human rights which can be used in the education system. In this material attention is to be given to the international law aspects. In addition, a survey is to be undertaken of areas where educational material on human rights is in need of supplementation, coupled with a review of the possibilities of producing this material.
- The Government intends commissioning an investigation of the feasibility of producing interactive educational material on human rights.
- The Government intends supporting NGO:s so as to enable them to improve the possibilities of providing their personnel and members with further training on human rights.
- The Government intends helping to facilitate the provision of meeting points where different groups in society can discuss matters relating to human rights.
- The Government finds that an information strategy needs to be devised for disseminating knowledge of human rights.

Reasons for the Government's assessment

In the autumn of 1997 the Government initiated an extensive information campaign on the subject of the Holocaust. This initiative, conducted as a project within the Government Offices, was dubbed Living History. Its purpose was to disseminate knowledge and information about the Holocaust and, with the Holocaust as its starting point, to create a broad-based discussion of such issues as democracy, tolerance, compassion and human equality. The information drive included the book "...tell ye your children...", which has now been published in eight languages and with a print run of about one million.

Inspired by the successes of the Living History project, the Government commissioned a number of national cultural institutions in January 1998 to report on the feasibility of creating a permanent exhibition about the Holocaust at one of Sweden's museums. The report submitted by the authorities in September 1998 constituted a first step in the contemplation of a permanent forum based on the Holocaust. Thus in September 1999 the Government appointed a committee to investigate the establishment of a permanent Forum for Living History (Ku 1999:09, dir. 1999:75).

The Government intends setting up a new authority, the Forum for Living History, in 2003. Its task will be to promote work with, discussion of and reflection on democracy, tolerance and human rights in the contemporary world, taking the Holocaust as its starting point. The purpose of these activities will be to strengthen people's determination to actively promote universal equality of human dignity.

The Forum for Living History should be located in Stockholm but should operate nationwide in partnership with other cultural institutions, schools, universities and colleges, popular education organisations and

other popular movements. Children and young persons attending compulsory and upper secondary school, together with teachers and other adults in the immediate surroundings of children and young persons, are especially important target groups for the Forum's activity.

The intention is for people's historical awareness to be deepened through the communication of history, e.g. in the form of exhibitions and artistic manifestations, and through education, lectures and debate.

The Forum for Living History will have a broadly defined mandate closely in line with the underlying intentions of this Action Plan. The Government intends to appoint an organising committee to design the Forum's activities in greater detail. The proposals contained in the Action Plan will be taken into account where relevant. This section presents measures which the Government intends taking.

Material on human rights

The UN proposal for the content of a Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education refers to the need for producing educational material. To inventory the need for new educational material, the Secretariat of the inter-departmental working group commissioned the Raoul Wallenberg Institute in the spring of 2001 to carry out a survey of educational material on human rights. The Institute reported back on this remit at the end of June 2001.

The survey has shown that there is a considerable quantity of material, addressed to various recipients. Among other things the survey report summarises the educational material used by various national authorities, NGO:s, universities, schools etc. in their teaching activities at present. The emphasis is on the material which has been or is used in the Swedish education system, e.g. pre-school education, compulsory schools, upper secondary schools and, to some extent, higher education. The survey as a whole is confined to material compiled from 1997 onwards. It also contains some information about teaching material compiled or used by various organisations, such as the UN, the EU, the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The survey also includes teaching material compiled or used by Swedish NGO:s.

In addition, the survey focuses on teaching material dealing with human rights in general and with particular fields, e.g. racism, children's rights and discrimination. The Basic Values project is also included. The survey reveals that human rights educational material for pre-school education and for junior and middle schools is in fairly limited supply. Certain material exists for the senior grades of compulsory school and for upper secondary school. There is also a certain amount of human rights study material for teachers. Less material is available, however, on the subject of discrimination in general and minority rights. Nor is there much teaching material available in other languages or adapted to the needs of persons with functional impairment.

One problem indicated by the survey is that the existing teaching and reference material have not been gathered together anywhere. This makes it difficult for teachers and schools to acquire a comprehensive view of the available supply. In other words, there is a great need for a

conspectus of existing human rights education material to be compiled and made available to schools. The Forum for Living History will play an important part where human rights education is concerned. The Government intends commissioning the production of material on human rights which can be used in the education system. In this material attention is to be given to the international law aspects. In addition, a survey is to be undertaken of areas where educational material on human rights is in need of supplementation, coupled with a review of the possibilities of producing this material.

Further groups in special need of human rights education will be defined during 2003 and 2004.

Several reference groups have drawn attention to the importance of compiling interactive educational material about human rights.

NGO:s

Many NGO:s today are already extensively involved in human rights education. This commitment on their part helps to increase understanding and commitment in Swedish society where human rights are concerned. Certain organisations in recent years have written what are termed parallel reports. Discussions in connection with these parallel reports are contributing towards a debate on human rights in society. Human rights education is also important. The Government therefore intends supporting the NGO:s in their efforts to disseminate knowledge of human rights, by promoting their opportunities for giving further training to their personnel and their members.

In this connection the Government wishes to draw attention to the importance of wider co-operation between national and local authorities on the one hand and NGO:s on the other where human rights education is concerned; see also Sections 6.7 and 9.9.

Seminars and outgoing activities

One important stage of an information strategy is the arrangement of meetings at which scope can be provided for human rights issues. The Government intends to facilitate the creation of meeting points, e.g. for NGO:s, national authorities and municipalities.

Important work for human rights can also be done through cultural initiatives. The task of the Forum for Living History will be to promote discussion of issues relating to democracy, tolerance and human rights. Taking the Holocaust as its starting point, the Forum will be able to contribute to this process, e.g. through exhibitions and artistic activity and through education, seminars and debate.

Information strategy

In order for the Action Plan and the various measures announced in it to achieve the widest possible distribution in society, an information strategy needs to be devised. Education and information are important tools for safeguarding human rights. The Forum for Living History will

be actively concerning itself with these matters. One important part of the strategy is to investigate the feasibility of compiling information material about human rights, e.g. for the public service. An information strategy must also take into account ways of enabling persons with functional impairment to make use of the material; see Section 10. Skr. 2001/02:83

9.8 Municipalities and county councils

The Government's assessment: The Government intends working during an introductory phase to ensure that human rights education is offered to employees and politicians in municipalities and county councils. The Government will be opening a discussion with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and the Federation of Swedish County Councils concerning the more detailed design of this education and its funding, and also concerning ways in which these organisations can contribute towards the conduct of the education.

Reason for the Government's assessment: As has already been made clear, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that human rights are respected and provided for. This responsibility devolves primarily on the Government, but also on national and local authorities.

Municipalities and county councils have a special responsibility where economic and social rights are concerned. This being so, it is important for them that knowledge of this responsibility and of the content of other rights should be disseminated, not least considering that knowledge of the various conventions can in itself be deficient. This, however, does not betoken a lack of knowledge concerning the values on which the Conventions are based. Nor does it mean that these questions are not a subject of discussion among local politicians and officials. Discussions do of course take place within municipalities and county councils, with reference to their activities as such. In addition, a host of local initiatives have been taken, for example in the form of municipal ombudsmen, user councils, policy documents and various action plans. It must also be noted in this connection that municipalities and county councils have a very high level of awareness concerning the basic values enshrined in certain of the Conventions, one such example being the UNCRC and its basic values concerning the best interests of the child. The important decisions affecting children and young persons are made at local level, above all in municipalities, but also by county councils. This applies, for example, to questions of child care, schooling, social services, health care, housing and leisure. Many municipalities and county councils are already aware of the importance of a child and youth perspective in their decision-making, and some of them have systems in place for articulating the child perspective in various connections.

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and the Federation of Swedish County Councils have stated that, in order for further progress to be made, it is important that future discussions should be based on activities and their content, not on the Conventions viewed in isolation.

As work on the Action Plan proceeded, it became evident that a closer inquiry was needed into the way in which human rights were addressed.

by local (municipal) authorities, and in the spring of 2000 the Stockholm Theological College was commissioned to carry out a survey of municipal activities for the promotion of human rights. The survey report shows that, while some municipalities have made a good deal of headway in particular fields, the overall need for education on the subject remains considerable. Skr. 2001/02:83

The education system is an important target group for human rights education. Meeting points need to be created where representatives of the education system will have an opportunity of meeting other agents with a specific knowledge of various human rights issues, e.g. the Ombudsman authorities and NGO:s. The Government therefore intends working during an introductory phase to ensure that human rights education is offered to employees and politicians in municipalities and county councils. The Government will be opening a discussion with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and the Federation of Swedish County Councils concerning the more detailed design of this education and its funding, and also concerning ways in which these organisations can contribute towards the conduct of the education. These education programmes shall be framed with reference to the various local government activities.

9.9 NGO:s

Concise description: During the spring of 2002 the Government will be giving NGO:s and others the opportunity of receiving grants towards activities promoting participation in democratic processes.

The Government's project Time for Democracy is a long-term development process for Swedish popular government. This development work will continue until the end of 2002. The overriding aim of the project is to augment civic awareness of and participation in the various political decision-making processes, and especially in elections. The development work comprises several activities, partly in support of democratic development. For the promotion of awareness of and participation in the political decision-making processes, the Government has on three occasions since 2000 awarded funding support for democratic development under the Swedish Popular Government (State Project Grants for Development Work) Ordinance (2000:648). This part of the project has elicited a great response from the general public. On the three occasions when applications were invited, support was requested by some 1,000 municipalities and NGO:s, of which only 130 municipalities, youth organisations, foundations, immigrant organisations, popular education organisations etc. could be awarded grants. Several of the projects for which grants were awarded are indirectly aimed at promoting human rights. Support has been given to a total of some 25 projects aimed, partly or wholly, at drawing attention, for example, to human rights education.

The Government's assessment: The Government intends awarding grants for the Human Rights Days in 2002.

Reason for the Government's assessment: Many different conferences and seminars on human rights have been conducted by several authorities, organisations, universities and colleges. The first "MR" (Human Rights) Days in Stockholm, for example, were arranged in November 2000, with more than 700 persons taking part in the various seminars and another 400 attending the open arrangements. In November 2001 the Government Offices received an application concerning funding support for the Human Rights Days in November 2002. The Government attaches importance to the arrangement of such meeting points as the Human Rights Days and intends making further grants towards this arrangement.

10 Information strategy for disseminating knowledge of human rights

10.1 General aspects of the information strategy

The Government's assessment

- The Government intends commissioning an information strategy to disseminate knowledge of human rights.
- The Government intends commissioning a special website on human rights.
- The Government intends having the Action Plan distributed to municipalities, certain national authorities, NGO:s etc.
- The Government intends having a summary of the content of the Action Plan translated into English and into the recognised minority languages.
- The Government intends making a summary of the content of the Action Plan available as a cassette recording.

Reason for the Government's assessment: Through this first Action Plan for human rights, the Government is laying the foundations of a more concerted approach to the treatment of human rights issues at national level.

The international conventions on human rights have been an important foundation for work on a national Action Plan. Disseminating knowledge of the content of these conventions is a commitment which every state has entered into, for example, under Article 42 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 7 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

It is important that a cogent strategy should be worked out for disseminating knowledge of human rights. Among other things the strategy should aim at informing the general public of what is meant by human rights and what agents in Swedish society are actively concerned with them. The Forum for Living History will be actively working on these issues. The Government would like to see the various agents who

have helped to draft the Action Plan playing an active part in the work of devising an information strategy. Skr. 2001/02:83

NGO:s are already engaged in extensive information work to disseminate knowledge of human rights in Sweden. They also have their own channels of information. These organisations, consequently, are playing an important part in the process of improving public knowledge of human rights.

As work has proceeded, attention has been drawn to the great need of better public information on the subject of human rights. A website should be created as an aid to the improvement of information regarding Sweden's human rights commitments. This will be an important aid to the dissemination of human rights information.

As part of the process of disseminating knowledge concerning the situation in Sweden and as information concerning the initial work devoted to drafting a National Action Plan, the survey report *Mänskliga rättigheter i Sverige – en kartläggning* (Human Rights in Sweden – A Baseline Study, Ds 2001:10) was distributed in the spring of 2001 to about 1,300 municipalities, universities and colleges, courts, NGO:s etc. A summary of the survey report was translated into English and sent, for example, to foreign embassies in Stockholm and to Swedish Embassies abroad. The Government intends having a summary of the content of the Action Plan translated into English and into the recognised minority languages, as a means of disseminating knowledge of the work done in Sweden. The Government also intends making a summary of the content of the Action Plan available as a cassette recording.

The Government's assessment

– The Government intends reviewing the accessibility of international documents on human rights and decisions by the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the possibilities of translating such documents into Swedish to a greater extent than at present.

– The Government, acting in consultation with the Office of the Prosecutor-General, the National Police Board and the National Prison and Probation Administration, intends arranging for the collection, the translation into Swedish if necessary and the publication of major documents in the field of human rights which have a bearing on the responsibilities of these authorities.

– The Government, acting in consultation with the National Courts Administration, intends to arrange for the collection, the translation into Swedish if necessary and the publication of major documents in the field of human rights which are of importance for the judicial system.

– The Government intends having Swedish translations prepared above all of future Swedish reports concerning the six UN Conventions on Human Rights as well as the concluding observations, and distributing, for example, the latest reports and comments and corresponding documents from the Council of Europe to the municipalities.

Reason for the Government's assessment: As work has progressed, it has become clear that information to the general public on human rights is in great need of improvement. The reference groups have particularly underscored the importance of knowledge of human rights and of greater understanding for the underlying reasons for the existence of various international conventions. It should be considered how far the availability of important international documents on human rights and decisions by the European Court of Human Rights can be improved and whether such documents can be more extensively translated into Swedish. To begin with, it is above all the availability of documents of relevance to the administration of justice and to the responsibilities of national authorities that should be improved. Several different NGO:s have referred to the importance of translation and distribution. The question of translating important human rights documents has also been observed by several UN Committees in their various examinations of Sweden's reports. It must therefore be considered a matter of particular urgency for the Swedish reports on the six different UN Conventions relating to Human Rights and the concluding observations to be translated into Swedish. It is also essential, for example, that the latest reports and concluding comments, as well as the corresponding documents from the Council of Europe, should be distributed to the municipalities. Several reference groups have also pointed out the need to improve the distribution of Swedish reports, e.g. to municipalities and county councils.

A national action plan for human rights, 2006–2009



FACT SHEET

Ministry of Justice, Sweden

Ju 06.05e March 2006

The communication A National Action Plan for Human Rights, 2006–2009 (Government Communication 2005/06:95) sets out a coherent approach to human rights issues in Sweden. The communication contains a number of measures aimed at promoting respect for human rights during the period 2006–2009. In connection with the presentation of the action plan in March 2006, the Government established the Delegation on Human Rights in Sweden (ToR 2006:27).

Objectives and intentions

The Government's long-term objective is to ensure full respect for human rights in Sweden. This means that human rights, as expressed through Sweden's international commitments, must not be violated. The Swedish legal system must comply with the international human rights conventions that Sweden has acceded to and these conventions are to be followed at both central and local government levels. To achieve the objective of full respect for human rights, it is important to conduct regular reviews of the possible problems that exist with regard to the protection of different rights in Sweden. A key task is to increase knowledge and awareness of human rights. It is also essential that efforts to protect and promote human rights are coordinated. In the national action plan the Government adopts a coherent approach to human rights issues in Sweden, both specific rights issues and issues related to knowledge, information and organisation.

The communication in brief

The communication A National Action Plan for Human Rights, 2006–2009 (Government Communication 2005/06:95) was presented to the Riksdag in March 2006. The communication contains an action plan for human rights for the period 2006–2009 (Part I) and a survey of the human rights situation in Sweden in 2005 (Part II). The survey intends to shed light on the shortfalls that may exist with regard to the protection and promotion of human rights in Sweden and thus provides a basis for the action plan.

Using the survey as its point of departure, the ac-

tion plan details measures aimed at strengthening a number of rights. The focus of the action plan is on protection against discrimination. Other issues include the rights of disabled people, the rights of the child, national minorities and the indigenous Sami people, men's violence against women including violence in the name of honour and human trafficking, the right to work, housing, health and education, rule of law issues and asylum and migration. Other measures aimed at increasing knowledge and information on human rights, both within the educational system and among the general public, are announced. Finally, the action plan addresses issues concerning the organisation of human rights efforts and methods, and follow-up and evaluation of the action plan.

An extensive amount of material was used to select the human rights issues to include in the survey and the action plan. This material comprised, first of all, comments and criticism from international treaty-monitoring bodies; secondly, comments from the evaluation of the first action plan; and thirdly, viewpoints and proposals for subjects to include in the survey and action plan received from a large number of actors, including parties in the Riksdag, government agencies, municipalities and county councils, institutions of higher education and NGOs.

Delegation on Human Rights in Sweden

In conjunction with the presentation of the action plan, the Government established a Delegation to support the long-term task of securing full respect for human rights in Sweden based on the action plan (ToR 2006:27). Within the framework of its remit the Delegation is responsible for

- supporting government agencies, municipalities and county councils in their work to secure full respect for human rights in their areas of activity,
- developing and implementing strategies to increase information and knowledge about human rights in special target groups in the community,
- stimulating public discussion on human rights, and
- presenting proposals on how to support the task of ensuring full respect for human rights in Sweden when the Delegation has completed its assignment.

The Delegation consists of a chair and ten representatives with expertise in various fields of human rights. It is required to have a reference group made up of representatives of NGOs. It also has a secretariat staffed by three full-time secretaries. The Delegation is to deliver its final report to the Government by 31 March 2010.

Background

At the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, all states were recommended to consider drawing up national action plans in order to identify measures to improve the promotion and protection of human rights. The Government presented its first national action plan for human rights in

2002. This action plan for the period 2002–2004 has been followed up and evaluated. Since the experience gained from the first action plan proved to be predominantly positive, a new action plan has now been drawn up.

The Government's human rights website

At www.manskligarattigheter.se, you can read more about human rights and the Government's efforts to protect and promote human rights both nationally and internationally. There you will also find the most important human rights conventions and other significant documents such as Sweden's reports to international treaty-monitoring bodies.



REGERINGSKANSLIET

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Printing by Grafisk Service, Stockholm, Sweden, april 2006. Article no. Ju 06.05e