

In addition, the Church of Sweden would like to submit the following.

The Right of the Child

More needs to be done in Sweden to implement children's rights. Implementation of the rights is still a problem in many municipalities. If the Swedish Government is serious about implementation, it should ratify the Optional Protocol No. 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This would provide important remedies for children whose rights are not respected and it would be a strong incentive for authorities and municipalities to improve implementation. The Government also needs to incorporate the convention into domestic law, as soon as possible. There is also a need to adopt a national action plan on how the implementation could be improved.

An issue of concern in Sweden is poverty and financial hardship in some families and especially among families with single parents or where the parents are dealing with unemployment or health problems. In its work the Church of Sweden meets many families who need financial assistance to get by in their daily lives, often help with basic needs such as food supplies or financial assistance with basic necessities. The general feeling among the deacons in the Church of Sweden is that the need of help is increasing. Children in these families are in a vulnerable situation and they have to do without certain things, regardless of how the levels of poverty are measured. Another continued problem with children's rights in poor families is the risk of getting evicted. In spite of efforts made, this is still a problem in some municipalities, and more needs to be done to secure that families with children are not evicted.¹

Other areas of concern where there is need to respect children's rights better are bullying and harassment in schools, children that have been placed in state institutions and asylum seeking children's rights.

When it comes to children's influence and participation in decision making more could be done to improve the ways of making children's voices heard. Church of Sweden has decided that child impact assessments are to be conducted in all decision making processes within the church. The use of child impact assessments is a successful method to secure that the interests and rights of children are taken into consideration in decision making processes and there is a continued need to develop such methods in Swedish municipalities and among authorities.

Discrimination

Many recommendations in the first universal periodic review advocate for enhanced efforts to fight xenophobia, racism and discrimination based on ethnicity, religion or legal status (such as persons seeking asylum). Church of Sweden affirms these recommendations as vital for a well-functioning and open society with respect for human rights.

The Rights of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants

Church of Sweden acknowledges the positive steps taken by the government when it comes to right to education for all children in Sweden and the right to immediate health care for all. However, the restrictions for persons seeking asylum and undocumented persons when it comes to access to health care are not justifiable nor logic and should be lifted. Church of Sweden has also observed that some municipalities claim that the EU-migrants are neither persons with residence nor undocumented and deny them health care and their children education. We believe that this is not in accordance with human rights nor the intentions of the law and we would like to see this clarified by the government.

¹ Statistict from Swedish Enforcement Authority, <https://www.kronofogden.se/28601.html>

Church of Sweden acknowledges the commitment from the government in investigating how to better fight xenophobia and racism, increasing the support to anti-discrimination bureaus and fighting myths around immigration through the launch of a government webpage. The increased use of ethnic profiling in police work is however counteracting these efforts. There is a need to work with ethics and human rights within certain sectors of the police force as well as other public bodies such as the court system.

Church of Sweden would like to see increased efforts to support civil society initiatives for bridge-building between people of different origins and of different religions. Local interfaith councils are vital in this development, as well as supporting interfaith youth-projects such as *One Sweden*, *Salaams vänner* and *Tillsammans för Sverige*. Religion is too often seen as a problem rather than a resource in fighting discrimination and racism and building a human rights' based society.

Church of Sweden also sees the vital need to strengthen the human rights instruments around migrant workers, especially women working in private homes. We would like to see a Swedish ratification of the ILO-convention on domestic workers as soon as possible, as well as increased efforts to ensure that migrant workers have the same legal protection from abuse as other workers.

Women's Rights

Church of Sweden submits that violence against women is still a serious human rights problem in Sweden. The work with protecting women from violence must be developed and strengthened. The work of relevant authorities to prevent violence against women and girls and to address individual cases needs to be supported.

More needs to be done to increase gender equality. Swedish authorities need to take active measures to promote an equal balance of women and men at all levels of professional life.

More needs to be done to promote gender equality among indigenous and minority women. The Swedish Reindeer Husbandry Law needs to be revised from a gender perspective in order to protect the rights of Sami women.² The Government's Strategy on Roma Inclusion contains initiatives to improve the situation of Roma women.³ Church of Sweden welcomes these initiatives and urges the Government to continue these efforts.

² Rennäringslag (1971:437), http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Rennaringslag-1971437_sfs-1971-437/?bet=1971:437

³ <http://www.government.se/sb/d/16234/a/193877>