



# Exchange of good practices on gender equality

Measures to fight  
violence against women  
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Comments Paper - Sweden



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# Swedish measures to combat men's violence against women

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## 1. Introduction

In Sweden, the debate on men's violence against women has been intense during the past year. Several cases of murder have highlighted the fact that violence is present in all parts of society, and that it even has fatal consequences. Every three weeks a woman is killed by a current or former male partner. Most of the victims have previously been in contact with authorities – social services, the health care, the police, etc. – and in several cases the man has been prosecuted, but released pending the trial. This has underlined the need for better risk assessments, closer cooperation between different relevant authorities and increased knowledge on men's violence against women, its manifestations and its consequences.

### 1.1. Legislation and action plans

There is a political consensus in Sweden that combating men's violence against women and providing professional care and support for women subjected to violence are important public issues.

In 1998, the Swedish Parliament approved the Government Bill "Violence Against Women" (1997/1998:55), a comprehensive programme of measures aimed at combating VAW. A new offence was introduced into the Penal Code: "gross violation of a woman's integrity".

In 2007, the Swedish Government launched "Action Plan for Combating Men's Violence against Women, Violence and Oppression in the Name of Honour and Violence in Same-Sex Relationships" (Govt. Communication 2007/08:39). The Action Plan contained proposals affecting a number of government agencies as well as municipalities, county councils and NGOs. More than 80 million Euro were allocated for the action plan during the years 2007–2010, and it covered six areas for measures and specific activities:

- increased protection and support to victims of violence;
- greater emphasis on preventive work;
- higher standards and greater efficiency in the judicial system;
- better measures targeting violent offenders;
- increased cooperation and coordination;
- enhanced knowledge and competence.

During the present term of office, 2011-2014, the government's measures within the above mentioned areas are focusing on how to integrate new working methods and approaches into regular activities, and on the follow-up and the evaluation of the agencies' activities.

In April 2012 the government announced its appointment of a Swedish Domestic Violence Coordinator. The tasks of the coordinator include bringing together and supporting the relevant authorities, municipalities, county councils and organisations to increase the effectiveness, quality and sustainability of the work against violence in close relationships. A final report is to be presented by 30 June 2014.

## 1.2. NCK

The National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence against Women (NCK) at Uppsala University and Uppsala University Hospital is commissioned by the Swedish government to compile and spread knowledge, research and methods; provide training for professionals; develop new methods; and provide support for women subjected to violence. It was founded in 1994, as a direct response to the UN Declaration on Elimination of Men's Violence against Women.

The Centre aims to be a link between the research community and practitioners who meet women exposed to violence in their daily work, such as police, staff in health and medical care services, lawyers, social workers, etc.

The Centre's main responsibility is to cover the field of men's violence against adult women. In 2008, the commission was extended to issues on violence and oppression in the name of honour and violence in same-sex relationships. The Centre has a clinical unit at Uppsala University Hospital, and a university unit for research and method development, education, research analysis and spreading of information.

NCK currently has two governmental commissions:

- Evaluation of the training carried out within the frames of "Action plan for combating men's violence against women, violence and oppression in the name of honour and violence in same-sex relationships" (Govt. Communication 2007/08:39) and "Action plan to prevent and hinder young persons from getting married against their will" (Govt. Communication 2009/10:229). The final report is to be presented by 30 April 2013.
- Developing the national telephone helpline for women, Kvinnofridslinjen, to ensure the quality of the support it provides and to reach out to more women who are subjected to threats, violence and/or sexual abuse. The final report is to be presented by 1 April 2015.

## 2. Measures in Sweden

### 2.1. Kvinnofridslinjen

The National Women's Helpline Kvinnofridslinjen is commissioned by the Swedish government and run by NCK. It is a telephone helpline for women subjected to violence who need support, help and information on local support services provided by public administration as well as NGOs. Kvinnofridslinjen is open 24 hours a day, all year round. Calling is free of charge and the call does not show on the telephone bill. The employees are social workers, midwives and nurses, and their task is to listen, to give professional support and to inform the women about where they can turn to for further help.

Prior to the launch of the helpline in 2007, a detailed survey of organisations and services providing victim support was carried out. The information was compiled in an internal database available to Kvinnofridslinjen's staff, so they can search for detailed information on support and services suitable for the individual caller.

The staff respond to approximately 70 calls a day. In three out of four cases it is the woman herself who is calling. The rest of the calls come from relatives or friends, or from other agencies, employers and people seeking information about VAW.

The helpline has been marketed via advertisements in newspapers, magazines and over the Internet, as well as by information material, media coverage and the website [www.kvinnofridslinjen.se](http://www.kvinnofridslinjen.se). Posters and cards with the phone number were distributed to pharmacies, health care clinics and police stations all over Sweden when the helpline was launched in 2007, and can now be ordered free of charge from the website. Special efforts have been made to make the website accessible for persons with disabilities.

#### 2.1.1. The website [www.kvinnofridslinjen.se](http://www.kvinnofridslinjen.se)

The website [www.kvinnofridslinjen.se](http://www.kvinnofridslinjen.se) is a complement to the helpline. There are easy-to-understand texts about VAW and links to further information on NCK's website and the NCK Knowledge Bank. Some of the texts are directed to friends and families of abused women, and others to practitioners who meet women subjected to violence in their profession.

The website has been translated into English and easy-to-read Swedish and provides brief information in 25 additional languages, including the official minority languages of Sweden. The website is also adapted for people with impaired vision.

The number of visitors on the website has increased from about 80,000 in 2008 to almost 280,000 in 2012.

### 2.2. NCK's internet-based knowledge bank

In September 2010, NCK launched an Internet-based and inter-disciplinary "Knowledge Bank" on violence against women, violence in same-sex relationships and violence and oppression in the name of honour. The ambition was to create a

website that is easy to navigate, with a variety of publications, facts and information related to these areas.

In addition to reports from the agencies and short presentations of more than one hundred researchers from Sweden, Norway and Denmark, the NCK Knowledge Bank includes more than 60 summaries on various aspects of violence, and a search engine linked to the national research databases Libris and SwePub. In the past year, more than 50,000 documents and reports were downloaded and opened by the visitors. The website is continually updated.

The website is developed and run in co-operation with the national and regional authorities dealing with issues of violence, e.g. the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority, the National Courts Administration, the National Police Board, the Swedish Prosecution Authority, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the National Board for Youth Affairs and the County Administrative Boards.

## 2.3. Other telephone helplines and chats

### 2.3.1 Women's shelters' organisations helplines

There are several telephone helplines run by NGOs in Sweden, and most of them are operated by local women's shelters. Sweden has two national organisations for women's shelters, with approximately one hundred local shelters and member associations each: the Organisation for Women's and Young Women's Shelters in Sweden, (ROKS), and The Swedish Association of Women's Shelters and Young Women's Empowerment Centres (SKR).

The request for support via e-mail or chat is continuously increasing, especially among young people, and some of the NGOs are staffed and have the equipment to comply with these requests.

#### *Tjejjouren.se*

Tjejjouren.se ("The Girls' Shelter") is a gateway for the young women's empowerment centers in Sweden. There are about sixty young women's empowerment centers aimed to support and strengthen young women. Solely women answer the phone and respond to questions or thoughts via e-mail or online chatting.

#### *Mailjouren*

Mailjouren ("The E-Mail Shelter") is an e-mail helpline run by SKR. Women can send an e-mail and receive a personal answer from a women shelter volunteer within a few days. Some of the questions and answers are published on a website, provided that the woman agrees, but it is never possible to identify the woman.

#### *Tjejjonen*

Tjejjonen (The Girl Zone) is a non-profit association linked to SKR. Their target group is girls and young women between the ages of 12-25 years. Their objective is to prevent mental illness among girls and young women. Thus, violence is just one of the issues dealt with. Tjejjonen offers contacts through chats, e-mail, counselling, mentorship and different kinds of activities.

### **2.3.2. Brottsofferjouren – Victim’s Support Organisation**

The Victim’s Support Organisation (BOJ) is a national NGO working to improve conditions for crime victims. The organisation has a hundred local support centres for victims, and a national telephone helpline.

### **2.3.3. Preventell – a helpline for men at risk committing sexual violence**

Preventell, a national helpline for men at risk of committing sexual violence, opened in March 2012. The helpline was initiated by the Swedish government and is run by the Centre for Andrology and Sexual Medicine at Karolinska University Hospital.

## **2.4. Examples of ICT used by the police**

The police in Sweden use information and communication technology (ICT) in different ways in their work to protect women exposed to violence.

Two examples close to the ones mentioned in the Spanish discussion paper:

- After a risk assessment is made, the police can provide a woman with an assault alarm with different functions such as GPS and recording device.
- A new law was introduced in 2011, which made it possible to use electronic monitoring to ensure that a perpetrator is following restraining orders. Due to difficulties procuring a system that meets the National Police Board’s requirements the implementation has been delayed.

## **2.5. Perpetrator intervention programmes**

### **2.5.1. Integrated domestic abuse programme (IDAP)**

The Swedish Prison and Probation Service only uses evidence based treatment programmes, and in this field they use the Integrated domestic abuse programme (IDAP), developed in Minnesota, USA.

IDAP is a treatment programme targeting adult men who have used threats, violence or other types of controlling behaviour towards a current or former female partner. Group sessions are combined with risk assessment related to relapse into domestic violence and followed by risk management and work with partner contact. The group programme is divided into nine themes: Non violence; Non threatening behaviour; Respect; Support and trust; Honesty and accepting responsibility; Sexual respect; Partnership; Responsible parenthood; Negotiation and justice.

### **2.5.2. NGOs treatments**

Some NGOs in Sweden offer process oriented intervention programmes. Unlike IDAP they are not accredited in Sweden. Some of the programmes are inspired by

the work at Alternativ Til Vold (ATV) in Norway and Center for Violence Intervention and Research (CIRV) in Canada.

### 2.5.3. Evaluation

The National Board of Health and Welfare evaluated intervention programmes in Sweden in 2010. The evaluation showed a decrease in many of the participating men's violent behaviour in a short term. The results have not been followed up in a long-term perspective or been compared to a control group.

## 3. Transferability issues

ICT has proved very useful in the work against violence. In Sweden, the majority of the population use internet on a daily basis. In 17 years, internet access among the population has increased from 2 percent in 1995 to 89 percent in 2012. This makes it possible to spread information and provide support in a very fast and efficient way.

But it is also important to remember the other side of the coin. Perpetrators can use tracking and monitoring systems for controlling and monitoring their partner and her actions. Therefore, security aspects must always be considered when using ICT. It is crucial to keep up with the technical development, and if possible foresee how perpetrators might use it for their purposes.

As a part of the Swedish government's commission to NCK to develop and ensure the quality of the support given by the national helpline Kvinnofridslinjen, NCK studies and further develops the use of ICT. The internal database on victim support resources around Sweden has been improved and subprojects are carried out to improve the website and evaluate the possibilities to offer secure solutions for support via chat or e-mail.

Unlike Spain, NCK has decided to keep the compilation of resources for internal use only. If it were to be made public, many data would have to be removed for secrecy reasons. The women or helpers can get the information they need 24/7 by calling the helpline.

Some women prefer to express themselves in writing instead of speaking over the phone, and want to get personal support by e-mail or via chat. Some Swedish NGOs can provide this today, but there are many obstacles that must be solved when it comes to governmental organisations. Apart from providing a secure solution, NCK and Kvinnofridslinjen must comply with the Swedish legislation concerning governmental agencies and health and medical services. Therefore, the issue must be examined thoroughly in the coming year.



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## Websites

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<http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/14974/a/171721>

The National Centre for Knowledge on Men's Violence against Women (NCK)  
[www.nck.uu.se](http://www.nck.uu.se)

[www.kvinnofridslinjen.se](http://www.kvinnofridslinjen.se)

The Swedish Police: [www.polisen.se](http://www.polisen.se)

The Swedish Prison and Probation Service: [www.kriminalvarden.se](http://www.kriminalvarden.se)

Brottsofferjourernas riksförbund, Crime Victim's Organisation: [www.boj.se](http://www.boj.se)

The Swedish Association of Women's Shelters and Young Women's Empowerment Centres, SKR: [www.kvinnojouren.se](http://www.kvinnojouren.se)

Roks, the National Organisation for Women's and Young Women's Shelters in Sweden: [www.roks.se](http://www.roks.se)

Young Women's Shelters: [www.tjejjouren.se](http://www.tjejjouren.se)

Tjejzonen, The Girls Zone: [www.tjejzonen.se](http://www.tjejzonen.se)

Preventell: [www.preventell.se](http://www.preventell.se)