**Subject: Report on the rights of the child and inclusive social protection - Human Rights Council Resolution 49/20**

1. **What social protection systems are in place for children in your country? Please provide examples of specific laws and regulations, measures, policies, and programmes directed at ensuring children’s access to inclusive social protection**

Sweden has a diverse and extensive system of social protection aimed at providing financial security to families during the years when they have many dependants, as well as support for people who are particularly vulnerable or experiencing difficulties. The best interest of the child is a governing principle for all public services. As of 1 January 2020 the CRC has the status of Swedish law. Protecting the rights of the child is an essential part of the social services provided by Sweden’s 290 municipalities.

*National system of social insurance*
Social insurance in Sweden provides financial security during various stages of life – including insurance and contributions to families with children, to people with a disability or illness, and to the elderly. The various forms of financial support to families contribute to better conditions for good financial living standards for all families with children and reduce economic disparities between households with and without children. In addition, family policy aims to support opportunities for both parents to take part in working life while being able to look after their children when they are young.

Financial support to families with children is divided into three main areas: insurance (parental benefit, temporary parental benefit, pregnancy benefit, child pension, pension rights for childcare years), general allowances (child allowance, adoption allowance), and means- and needs-tested allowances (maintenance support, housing allowance and care allowance for disabled children). The system consists of both income-related and flat-rate cash compensations.

To receive allowances and benefits from the social insurance system, the individual must be insured in Sweden and meet certain benefit specific requirements. The Swedish Social Insurance Agency administers benefits and allowances for families with children, people who are sick and people with disabilities, while the Swedish Pensions Agency is responsible for the national public pension system. The assessment of whether an individual is insured is further governed by the Social Insurance Code and international agreements and regulations. The assessment procedures and the criteria applied are the same across the country. In general, to be considered insured in Sweden, a person must live or work in Sweden. This may entitle for example a parent to residence-based and/or work-based benefits and allowances for their children.

To be entitled to the residence-based part of the social insurance system, a person must be considered as having his or her habitual residence in the country. The residence-based allowances provide a basic cover and include universal as well as means-tested benefits and allowances. General child allowance is for instance a universal flat-rate allowance, granted to all parents with children at the age of 0-16, regardless of household income. The allowance is paid from the month following the child’s birth, or later, for example, if the child moves to Sweden. Child allowance is tax-free and is paid up to and including the quarter in which the child turns 16. The child allowance is SEK 1 250 per month and child. A supplementary allowance for additional children is paid to families with two or more children.

Housing allowance is means-tested, granted only to households with children with a low income. The size of the allowance depends on housing costs, the size of the home, household income and number of children. Maintenance support ensures that children whose parents are living apart receive some support if the parent who is supposed to pay child support does not pay. Maintenance support is a means-tested benefit amounting up to 1 673 SEK per month until the child becomes 11 years old, 1 823 SEK per month until the child becomes 15 years old and 2 223 SEK per month after the child becomes 15 years old. Maintenance support is paid to the parent with whom the child is living, or directly to the child if the child is over the age of 18 and still attending upper secondary school. The parent who is supposed to pay child support is obliged to pay back all or part of the amount for the maintenance support), depending on his or her income and the number of children he or she has to provide for, to the Social Insurance Agency. Parental benefit at the minimum level and guaranteed basic level, are also residence-based benefits.

An individual working in Sweden is normally insured for work-based benefits, regardless of whether they are residing in the country or not. The Swedish work-based benefits are mainly income-replacement benefits. Examples of work-based benefits directed at families with children are pregnancy benefit, parental benefit at sickness benefit level, and temporary parental benefit. Parental benefit is paid for a total of 480 days in connection with childbirth or adoption, and the days are divided equally between parents with joint custody of a child. For 390 of these days, the compensation level is approximately 80 per cent of the benefit-qualifying income and in order to receive the benefit the parent has to meet certain qualifying conditions. Parents that are not insured for work-based benefit, or has a low income, receive a minimum guaranteed benefit of SEK 250/day. 90 days out of the 480 are given at a flat rate of SEK 180 a day for everyone. The parental benefit days can be distributed as chosen between the parents, with exception of 90 days each that are reserved and therefore cannot be transferred. Parents with sole custody of a child are eligible to the total of 480 days.

The temporary parental benefit entitles compensations to parents who have a need to stay at home from work, or refrain from unemployment benefit, to care for a sick child. The benefit can be received while caring for a child between 8 months and 12 years old, for a maximum of 120 days per child per year. The set age limit can however be extended in certain situations, such as if the child is in hospital or needs special supervision or care due to an illness or disability. Parents of a seriously ill child up to the age of 18 can receive compensation for an unlimited number of days.

*Municipal social services including for children and youth*

Social protection for children is likewise provided through the health care system and the social services within the remit of Sweden’s regional and local authorities. Key legislation in this area includes the Social Services Act, the Care of Young Persons Act and the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons w certain Functional Impairments.

For instance, according to the Social Services Act, those who cannot support themselves may be entitled to social assistance, a temporary financial support from the municipality which also constitutes the ultimate safety net. Social assistance is an income and assets-tested benefit, based on the obligation to exhaust all other means of support, and to be actively seeking employment. According to Swedish legislation, social assistance is a right to a certain standard of living if no other means of income can be obtained. When seeking social assistance, a recipient must try to claim all other available allowances and benefits, such as sickness allowance, parental benefit, housing allowance and maintenance support from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, before claiming social assistance. The duration of social assistance is indefinite if the conditions are met.

* *Disability policy*

The national goal for disability policy, taking the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a starting point, is to achieve equal living conditions and full participation in society for persons with disabilities in a society based on diversity. This goal shall contribute towards greater gender equality and consideration of the children’s rights perspective.

During 2019 and 2020 new legislation came into force ensuring the right to personal assistance for breathing aid and tube feeding for persons with severe disabilities. A report from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency stated that the new legislation had resulted in more children being granted personal assistance, especially children up to six years old.

* Since January 2023, new rules are regulated concerning personal assistance that will benefit children. Support that is needed due to medical problems and that is needed continuously during the day because of the disability, such as epilepsy, will give the right to personal assistance. Support that is needed due to a mental disability to prevent someone from physically harming themselves or others will also give the right to personal assistance. Since 2021 support linked to assistance with breathing or meals in the form of gavage give the right to personal assistance. These needs shall not be regarded as part of normal parental responsibility and shall therefore give the right to personal assistance in their entirety These new regulations will contribute to children being granted personal assistance to a greater extent and their parents thus being given the opportunity for relief in their parental responsibilities, something that will also benefit siblings of children with disabilities.
* An inquiry is currently working to review the legislation and determine whether the state should take over the entire responsibility for the cost and general planning of the personal assistance regulated under the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments. Today the cost and planning of the personal assistance is shared by the state and municipalities.
1. **What are the main gaps and challenges to children’s enjoyment of social protection in law, policy, and practice in your country and the impacts on children’s rights? Please provide any relevant statistical or disaggregated data based on age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, migration status, or other categories. Please consider the specific situation of marginalized children and those in vulnerable situations in your response.**

In general, children and youth in Sweden are enjoying a high level of social protection. However, as recognised in the Government’s Budget Bill for 2023, there are remaining gaps and challenges in this respect. For example, the number of children who spend more than 10 years during their childhood under the 60 percent threshold marking low economic standard have increased. This is particularly evident in families where both parents are born outside of Sweden. Further, the number of children affected by evictions has grown in recent years and amounted to 572 in 2021 according to the Swedish Enforcement Agency. Foreign born Swedes are overrepresented among the homeless as well as among those who receive social assistance, making up nearly two thirds of all long-term recipients of such assistance in 2021. Yet another challenge concerns education for children and youth in institutional care as they complete upper secondary education to a much lower degree than other young people. The number of trained social workers specialised in social child and youth care has increased but the municipalities still report a shortage of experienced social workers in this area.

*Number of children aged 0–17 affected by eviction*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|   |   | Of which |
|   | Number of children | Permanently resident | Alternately resident | Shared-custody children |
| 2015 | 472 | 354 | 66 | 52 |
| 2016 | 387 | 275 | 72 | 40 |
| 2017 | 392 | 262 | 58 | 72 |
| 2018 | 448 | 315 | 62 | 71 |
| 2019 | 467 | 286 | 80 | 101 |
| 2020 | 449 | 281 | 84 | 84 |
| 2021 | 572 | 316 | 120 | 136 |

Source: The Swedish Enforcement Authority

*Children by number of years with a low economic standard, children born in 1990 and 2000, percent*



Source: Statistics Sweden and Ministry of Finance.

Note: Sv indicates that the parents, or the parent, were born in Sweden. Sv/U indicates that one parent was born in Sweden and one parent was born abroad. U indicates that the parents/parent were born abroad.

Swedish social insurance is based on work and residence, and therefore covers just about everyone who lives or works in the country, giving a broad protection for all families with children legally residing in Sweden. The various types of financial supports are further designed to meet specific needs, for example, the needs of parents living apart and parents of sick children or children with disabilities.

For parents that are refugees or asylum-seekers that have not yet retained legal residence and are not able to support themselves and their children financial support for asylum seekers can be paid out. The financial support is made up of several parts: daily allowance, accommodation compensation and a special grant. …

*Applications for asylum received, 2019-2021*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2019** |  |  | **2020** |  |  | **2021** |  |  |
| **Age** | **0–6**  | **7–12**  | **13–17**  | **0–6**  | **7–12**  | **13–17**  | **0–6**  | **7–12**  | **13–17**  |
| **Male** | 1 719 | 843 | 936 | 978 | 420 | 512 | 805 | 400 | 591 |
| **Female** | 1 645 | 699 | 573 | 969 | 376 | 311 | 800 | 354 | 311 |
| **Total** | 3 364 | 1 542 | 1 509 | 1 947 | 796 | 823 | 1 605 | 754 | 902 |

Source: Swedish Migration Agency

See answer to question 1 related to social assistance.

*Number of households receiving social assistance for age-group 18–64 years 2017-2021*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** |
| **All recipient households** | **204 360** | **195 779** | **191 665** | **188 250** | **172 958** |
| **Single women**  | **76 861** | **74 474** | **73 356** | **73 882** | **69 668** |
| without children | 45 279 | 43 947 | 43 526 | 44 563 | 42 818 |
| with children | 31 582 | 30 527 | 29 830 | 29 319 | 26 850 |
| **Single men** | **91 799** | **88 486** | **88 635** | **85 648** | **77 872** |
| without children | 85 496 | 82 650 | 83 103 | 80 047 | 72 924 |
| with children | 6 303 | 5 836 | 5 532 | 5 601 | 4 948 |
| **Couples** | **35 696** | **32 818** | **29 669** | **28 719** | **25 418** |
| without children | 7 734 | 6 840 | 6 244 | 6 045 | 5 471 |
| with children | 27 962 | 25 978 | 23 425 | 22 674 | 19 947 |

Source: National Board of Health and welfare

*Recipient households as percentage of all households for age-group 18–64 years 2017-2021*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** |
| **All recipient households** | **5,6** | **5,3** | **5,1** | **5,0** | **4,6** |
| **Single women**  | **8,9** | **8,5** | **8,3** | **8,3** | **7,7** |
| without children | 6,7 | 6,5 | 6,3 | 6,4 | 6,0 |
| with children | 16,7 | 16,0 | 15,4 | 15,1 | 13,9 |
| **Single men** | **9,4** | **8,9** | **8,7** | **8,3** | **7,5** |
| without children | 9,3 | 8,8 | 8,7 | 8,3 | 7,5 |
| with children | 11,7 | 10,3 | 9,3 | 9,0 | 7,9 |
| **Couples** | **1,9** | **1,8** | **1,6** | **1,6** | **1,4** |
| without children | 0,9 | 0,8 | 0,7 | 0,7 | 0,6 |
| with children | 3,0 | 2,8 | 2,5 | 2,4 | 2,1 |

Source: National Board of Health and welfare

*Recipient households by country of birth and household type, 2021*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Born in Sweden** | **Foreign born** |
| **Single women**  | without children | 22 728 | 23 280 |
|  | with children | 8 218 | 18 646 |
| **Single men** | without children | 40 094 | 35 998 |
|  | with children | 2 391 | 2 609 |
| **Couples** | without children | 1 364 | 6 365 |
|  | with children | 1 244 | 19 274 |

Source: National Board of Health and welfare

*Children in recipient households*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Number of children in household receiving assistance** | **Number of children in household receiving assistance 10 of 12 months during a year** | **Percentage of all children living in household receiving assistance** |
| 2012 | 131 348 | 52 064 | 6,8 |
| 2013 | 138 488 | 51 772 | 7,1 |
| 2014 | 139 799 | 50 977 | 7,0 |
| 2015 | 142 592 | 51 057 | 7,0 |
| 2016 | 139 771 | 48 933 | 6,7 |
| 2017 | 143 376 | 47 988 | 6,8 |
| 2018 | 138 787 | 48 514 | 6,5 |
| 2019 | 132 839 | 49 644 | 6,1 |
| 2020 | 130 076 | 53 616 | 5,9 |
| 2021 | 117 251 | 50 572 | 5,3 |

Source: National Board of Health and welfare

1. **What are the good practices initiated by the Government to ensure that social protection benefits the rights of children in your country?**

The Government’s objective with the financial family policy is to contribute to improved financial living conditions for all families with children, reduce economic differences between households with children and those without, and contribute to a gender-equal parenthood.

Family policy covers all families and helps to raise their economic standard. Targeted measures and means-tested benefits, such as housing allowance, can be particularly important to single households with children or young parents with a weaker attachment to the labour market.

The introduction and expansion of reserved months of parental benefit aims at emphasizing the equal and joint responsibility of parents in caring for the child, and likewise to achieve a more even distribution of unpaid household and care work, and gender equality in the labour market. The measure reinforces the child’s right to both their parents during the upbringing.

1. **Are there examples of how measures and responses to alleviate poverty through social protection systems in emergency situations or, for example, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, have positively affected children’s rights, particularly to social security?**

During the pandemic a temporary supplementary allowance has been paid out to housing allowance recipients with children to alleviate the economic situation for those households. The temporary supplement has been paid out 1 July–31 December 2020 and 1 July–31 December 2021. The supplement was reintroduced in 2022 due to the rising living expenses (mainly on food, electricity and fuel) and was paid out 1 July–31 December 2022. The temporary supplement will also be paid out 1 January 2023–30 June 2023. The temporary supplement is targeting households with children with low incomes, which positively affect children’s right to economic protection.

During the pandemic, parents could also receive compensation through temporary parental benefit if their child’s school or preschool had to close due to Covid-19. Through the measure, the parents’ income loss got reduced in these situations.

Furthermore, in accordance with a specific ordinance (2020:193), since 2020 central government subsidies are provided for Sweden’s local and regional authorities aiming at strengthening their capacities to deal with the impact of the pandemic on health care and social services.