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| **Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden** |
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| Department for International Law, Human Rights  and Treaty Law |
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Swedish commentaries in response to the questionnaire for the report of the OHCHR on ways to bridge the gender digital divide form a human rights perspective

**Question 1**

There is a high degree of access to internet in Sweden. In total, 93 percent of the population aged 16 to 85 in the country has access to the internet at home. The most common area of use of internet among people aged 16 to 85 was sending or receiving e-mail, which 84 percent had done. Other nearly equally common areas of use included searching for information about goods and services, using internet banking and reading online news, which approximately 8 of 10 people had done. In total, 23 various areas of use of the internet has been examined.

When Swedes access the internet away from home, they most often do this via a mobile phone or smart phone. In the first quarter of 2016, 71 percent of Swedes, that is, nearly 6 million people accessed the internet in this way.

According to PTS's (the telecom regulator) Broadband Survey 2015, 67 percent of all households and businesses have access to broadband of at least 100 Mbit / s in October 2015. In October 2015 over 99 percent of all households and businesses, both in and outside urban areas and small villages had access to mobile broadband using LTE (Long Term Evolution, 4G).

The use among individuals reveals no major difference in the use of computers and the Internet between women and men, girls and boys.

In Sweden, work for gender equality is done both through legislation and attitude. Sweden has a high female employment rate, high female representation in political bodies but, despite this there are not yet equal conditions for women and men in many respects. Salary differences persist, many women have got a part-time work when they become parents and a small proportion of women gainfully employed run their own businesses. The proportion of women in the IT industry is low and the growth rate of the influx of women into the industry has indeed increased slightly but remains low. From 2006 to 2012 the proportion of women in the ICT industry increased from 18,2procent to 19.6 percent. Since 2010, the figures have been largely unchanged. The wages gap between men and women in the ICT industry was 6 per cent less for women in the latest survey year 2010. From an economic standpoint, for a country's ICT- industry to withstand competition from abroad, underrepresented groups like women must play a greater role.

In higher education, there has been a decrease in the proportion of women studying IT and computer technology. By extension, this means a risk that the sector develops with less participation of women. A more even gender balance contributes - that the skills base becomes larger and that gender equality is increasing. That in itself will also contribute to greater percentage of women participating in the digitization process of the entire society.

Statistics about civilians’ computer usage and internet shows that approx 30 % of men and 13 % of women have at one time or another done some programming. Amongst non-native persons, 29 % of the men had done some programming and 9 % of the women. It is also more common for men than women to have experience in installing new equipment; a new printer for example. Women are also less likely than men to feel that they have all the information they require in order to keep up to date on internet safety.

Broadband provides better conditions for women in rural areas to operate from home part-time and distance learning, including higher education. Today there is a bias in which more women have part-time jobs and their unpaid care work with children and family, which binds them at home. Improved broadband connectivity enables distance learning and additional employment opportunities, incl. entrepreneurship.

Businesses, especially female entrepreneurs in rural areas, are dependent on well-functioning electronic communications. Broadband connections with high transmission is in many cases a prerequisite for being able to operate and develop the agricultural and industrial sectors, e-commerce or other service and service business such as tourism, transport, crafts, etc. in sparsely populated areas. Many of these areas employ women.

As young people tend to moves from rural areas the proportion of older people increases, something that can cause problems in the future. There are many communities in rural areas that have an aging population. If it continues, it will be more difficult to maintain prosperity. The development and use of smart digital solutions facilitate in primary, medical and elderly care, as well as in self-care at home (e-health). The activities are supported and enabled by broadband access. Also, this involves many women's working conditions and the development of job opportunities for them.

There are a number of factors, which affect digital inclusion, e.g. age, level of education, experience in and access to internet in the workplace and also financial status. Unqualified women are one of the groups that have had the longest time accessing the internet.

The gap between the income of men and women remains significant, despite the high educational level of women. Low income hampers digital inclusion and many women cannot afford a computer or a tablet. The difference in digital participation between the sexes is also the most significant in the low income bracket

A survey from one of the trade unions (Unionen) in 2015 showed that more a lot of young woman cannot imagine working with ICT. 41 percent think it is mainly because the industry has so few women.

EU concludes in a study from 2013 that there are too few women in the IT sector, that women more often choose to take early retirement and that many women who have an education in the ICT area choose to not work in the sector. The study concluded that if more women choose a career in the sector it would benefit both industry and the women and the economy in Europe. The study suggests four key concerns:

* Renew the industry's image among women and in society, for example by informing young women about the aspects of the IT industry that is interesting (an exciting, varied and paid employment).
* Give the women in the industry more influence by working with businesses to promote harmonized programs that provide uniform and clear career opportunities.
* Increase the number of women entrepreneurs in the ICT sector, for example by facilitating access to seed and venture capital.
* Improving working conditions in the industry, for example, by stressing that the companies that hire women get better results.

**Question 2**

Women and men should be visible in the statistics. For this to be possible, statistics must be disaggregated by gender . The Government of Sweden has decided that there shall be official statistics on gender equality. The goal is that all statistics concerning individuals shall be collected, analysed and presented by gender . Gender should be the basis for a comprehensive and thorough breakdown of all statistics. In addition, the statistics should be presented in such a way that they are easily accessible to users. In the Official Statistics Act (2001:100) there is a paragraph in the section ”Accessibility”, Article 14: Official statistics related to individuals shall be disaggregated by sex, unless there are special reasons for not doing so. Statistics Sweden has produced advice and guidelines for work with statistics broken down by sex (CBM 2004:1). The book can be downloaded from Statistics Sweden’s website. However, statistics broken down by gender alone are not sufficient for making analyses on gender equality. For this purpose it is also necessary to use statistics that illustrate gender equality issues in society.

Gender disaggregated statistics, surveys and gender analyses are a basic prerequisite for making gender inequality in society visible and conducting an effective process of change. Access to such statistics needs to improve. The Government is therefore preparing a proposal to introduce a requirement that all agencies that present individual-based statistics in their annual reports should present this data disaggregated by sex.

Since 2012, Statistics Sweden’s website has presented gender statistics in the form of indicators linked to the gender equality policy objectives as well as in-depth information in some areas. Statistics about use of computers and the internet by private persons has been published yearly since 2000, except 2006.

Examples are:

* Fewer women than men use the Internet "almost every day". For younger than 45+ years, the proportion of women is higher. (http://www.scb.se/sv\_/Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Levnadsforhallanden/Levnadsforhallanden/IT-bland-individer/15269/15276/281518/)
* More women than men have never used the Internet, especially 65+ (<http://www.scb.se/sv_/Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Levnadsforhallanden/Levnadsforhallanden/IT-bland-individer/15269/15276/281496/>)
* Fewer women are active on the authorities' websites (<http://www.scb.se/sv_/Hitta-statistik/Statistik-efter-amne/Levnadsforhallanden/Levnadsforhallanden/IT-bland-individer/15269/15276/347382/>)
* The percentage of women (85%) that send / receive email is slightly higher than men (82%.http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/sv/ssd/START\_\_LE\_\_LE0108\_\_LE0108B/LE0108T05/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=a033f1c1-4c1d-4f48-b9d7-bc92cf25650a

**Question 3**

One of the main aims of the Swedish government is that decisions in all policy areas will contribute to gender equality. The overarching goal of the Swedish gender equality policy objectives is that:

Women and men shall have the same power to shape society and their own lives. There are six sub-goals:

1. gender equal division of power and influence,
2. economic gender equality,
3. gender equal education
4. a gender equal division of unpaid housework and provision of care,
5. gender equal health
6. men's violence against women must stop

• *(Adopted by the Swedish Parliament in May-2006)*

2. Economic equality

* Women and men should have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to education and paid work that provide lifelong economic independence.
* Women and men should have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to availability of work and the same opportunities and conditions with regard to both employment, remuneration and other conditions, as well as professional development.
* The target has a life cycle perspective, i.e. the paid work mean economic security and independence even during the retirement years
* The goal is economic equality not only the same opportunities.
* Women and men should have equal opportunities to be financially independent and able to support themselves and any children through work.

(*According to the Govt. 2005/06: 155)*

Initiatives has for many years been taken to facilitate and expand access to Internet for women and men, girls and boys.

With a growing percentage of elderly in the population, it is important to ensure that these can be digitally involved. The government proposed in 2016 a present tax deduction program (RUT) to also include IT services such as installation, repair and maintenance of computer and information technology equipment, computer programs, etc. The amendments entered into force on 1 August, 2016. Studies have shown that it is mostly people over 65 and more often women who are interested in these IT services. The tax deduction increase digital inclusion of certain groups in society and also contributes to greater gender equality.

**Question 4**

Thera is of course a lot of challenges for Government in developing a digitalisation policy that takes in account all aspects. Questions concerning gender equality is reflected in many of them, like digital inclusion, digital competence and skill to mention some.

##### Digital inclusion

There is a number of factors, which affect digital inclusion, e.g. age, level of education, experience in and access to internet in the workplace and also financial status. Women with short education are one of the groups that have had the longest time accessing the internet

The gap between the income of men and women remains significant, despite the high educational level of women. Low income hampers digital inclusion and many women cannot afford a computer or a tablet. The difference in digital participation between the sexes is also the most significant in the low income bracket.

Single mothers often prioritise her children’s access to computers, smartphones and/or tablets.

Through statistics and analysis of how women in different groups use the internet, we can get a better understanding of how digital inclusion can be encouraged. We do for instance need more information about ICT usage in smaller companies owned and run by women. What is lacking, as indicated in ICT at the service of mankind, is gendered statistics that illustrate the access to and the usage of ICT for men and women with disabilities.

##### Digital competence

Collaborate with active parties within education and the civil society to design and implement gender aware efforts that contribute to more women attaining digital skills.

Spread knowledge of successful praxis for gender aware pedagogy in training programme, seminars, conferences and publications as spreading tried and tested praxis to encourage female inclusion.

##### Digital skill

Gender is reflected in the digital world, where there are differences in how men and women use the internet. The differences in the uses affect the digital competence of men and women. Education statistics from SCB (Statistics Sweden) indicates that staff training amplifies traditional gender patterns where women to a greater extent undertake further education in the health care sector and men more in technology, manufacturing and various types of computer uses.

Women must be granted access to both basic digital skills and specialist competence within ICT development. As recognised in a number of state inquiries, in order to achieve results, it is important to focus on the short-comings and changes needed within the education system rather than ‘‘the short-comings of women”.

There is also a need for raising the competency level in order to strengthen the gender perspective in ICT-related education programmes and the gender awareness of tutors in all forms of adult/further education. There is plenty of know-how and knowledge to pick up on in e.g. training programmes for technology tutors, courses for trainers and studies about gender, learning and ICT.

If more educators and career advisers obtain competence in gender equality issues, then more women will gain access to specialist competence and expertise through colleges, vocational colleges, technology and engineering colleges and other vocational training programmes.

**Question 5**

A new Broadband Strategy has been decided in January 2017 and a new Digitalisation Strategy is under way, replacing the former Digital Agenda of 2015. There is no direct reference to human rights or gender considerations as both aspects are fundamental prerequisite in the strategies, not needed to be quoted. That is also the case in the drafting of a new Information Security Strategy. That strategy is to some extent based on the EU Network and Information Security directive.

**Question 6**

There is a high degree of digital literacy in Sweden, except for primarily elderly and immigrants without any or a low education. Measures are taken to improve reading and writing abilities for immigrants without basic knowledge’s, including digital skills.

**Question 7**

Swedish legislation on violence is integrated into the Penal Code (Brottsbalken [1962:700]). The most central, general provisions in this regard can be found in Chapter 3 on Offences against Life and Health, for example Chapter 3 section 5 on Assault. Swedish legislation generally does not differentiate between crimes by the sex of the perpetrator or the victim. The gender-biased crime gross violation of a woman’s integrity is an exception, as it also exists in the gender neutral form gross violation of integrity. The offence gross violation of a woman’s integrity came into force in 1998 and deals with repeated criminal acts directed by men against women with whom they have or have had a close relationship. The provision is intended to increase the penal value of offences which together constitutes a serious violation of a woman’s integrity.

The growth of the Internet has brought many positive changes for the freedom of speech and the freedom of expression. Developments in society and technology have also increased opportunities for communication and information dissemination and thus also the possibility of committing acts that involve threats and violations. Threats and violations can be as severe on the Internet as in real life. The problem that online abuses constitutes must be targeted broadly and together with the civil society. To ascertain that the legislation is fully applicable also in relation to modern technologies that, the Swedish government is currently conducting a broad review of the protection provided by criminal law for individuals’ personal privacy, particularly with regard to threats and other violations. A Committee of Inquiry has recently proposed that the criminal law protection of the personal privacy should be strengthened and modernized in several ways, e.g. by introducing a new penalty provision on unlawful violation of the privacy. The new provision entail criminal liability in certain cases for those who violate someone else’s privacy by spreading images or other information in a way that is intended to cause tangible harm to the person who is subject of the information. The proposals are currently being considered by the Government Offices. Even though the new legislation will be gender neutral, it is often women and young people who are being targeted by threats and violations. Thus, strengthening the general criminal law protection for individuals’ personal privacy online, would help addressing and countering gender based violations online.

Cybercrimes have increased over the past years and investigating these crimes is a major challenge for the Swedish Police Authority. The Swedish Police Authority is taking this development seriously and have, among other things, launched a strategic initiative in order to enhance the capacity to address hate crimes and crimes against fundamental rights. For example, the initiative has led to the establishment of dedicated units working on these issues. The Police have also established a Cybercrime Centre on 1 October 2015 with a view to improve its work against all forms of cybercrimes. However, on 21 December 2016 the EU Court Justice concluded that the Swedish legislation on data retention is incompatible with EU-law. The judgment is a serious setback for the Police to investigate all sorts of crime on the internet and including for instance threats against women. The Swedish Prosecution Authority faces similar challenges and have, among other things, developed a guide with answers to frequent questions related to threats and violations on the internet.

There is a no specific legislation in place covering gender based violence online.

The Internet has become an arena for different forms of men's violence against women, including threats and other forms of violations of privacy. The penalty provisions protecting privacy is somewhat archaic designed. An investigation has been carried out to propose a modern and strong criminal protection of personal privacy. The proposal includes a new penal provision on unlawful infringement of privacy. This entails a criminal liability for infringing someone else's life by spreading the image or other data in a way that is likely to cause substantial harm to the person involved. Furthermore, the investigation has proposed changes to the penal provisions on assault, harassment, slander, coarse slander and insult, and certain extensions to criminal liability under the Act (1998: 112) on electronic notice boards as well as the rights of crime victim compensation. These proposals are currently in the Government Offices. The Government considers that legislative measures must be combined with a strategic prevention of hate speech.

"Hate speech and abuse on the Internet" is a guide in different languages for parents and other adults caring for children and their use of the internet. The guide is published by the Swedish Media Council. http://www.statensmedierad.se/publikationer/nohate/hatespeechandabuseontheinternetenglish.1550.html