

## Action programme for gender equality in the Riksdag for the electoral period 2018–2022





## Summary

The Riksdag should be gender-equal. Members of the Riksdag should have the same genuine opportunities to perform their official duties regardless of gender. By continuously highlighting gender equality issues and increasing awareness of the gender-equality-based consequences of how the work of the Riksdag is carried out, the conditions for a gender-equal Riksdag can constantly be improved. The action programme for gender equality in the Riksdag is intended to help to reach the goal of a gender-equal Riksdag.

It is proposed that the focus of the action programme for 2018–2022 should be on how we treat people, which is in line with the result of the mapping of gender equality in the Riksdag that was carried out during the former electoral period. Another purpose of the work that was carried out during this period was to increase knowledge and awareness of the significance of gender when it comes to power and influence.

## Background

In June 2006<sup>1</sup>, the Riksdag decided that continuous and systematic work to promote gender equality should be carried out in the Riksdag and that the Riksdag Board should have special responsibility for this. The Board should establish an action programme for gender equality for each electoral period. Work on gender equality should also be followed up and evaluated

The Riksdag Board established an action programme for gender equality during the last three electoral periods. The purpose of the action programme during the previous electoral period (2014–2018) was to highlight differences in the conditions available for female and male members of the Riksdag to perform their duties. An extensive mapping of gender in the Riksdag was carried out, which included a survey and in-depth interviews with members of the Riksdag.

<sup>1</sup> 2005/06:KU21.

In summary, the findings of the studies<sup>1</sup> showed that Riksdag members overall felt that they had the same conditions available to perform their duties regardless of gender. Female and male members also thought that they had equal opportunities to exercise influence and have political impact. The group consisting of young women (35 years of age and younger) felt that they were faced with greater challenges in performing their duties than other groups. The studies also indicated that there are areas where further action needs to be taken to make the Riksdag gender-equal. This particularly concerned the way people are treated and the possibility to combine the working duties of an MP with family obligations.

At their meeting on 30 January 2019, the Riksdag Board appointed a working group with the task of preparing a proposal for an action programme for the electoral period 2018–2022. The working group was to draw from experiences from previous action programmes and, using the mapping that was carried out during the previous electoral period, propose various measures that are needed to ensure that the Riksdag should be a parliament in which women and men have the same conditions to enable them to perform their duties. The working group proposes the following action programme for gender equality during the electoral period.

## **Orientation – a gender-sensitive Riksdag**

The overall goal of the action programme is to work for a gender-sensitive parliament. As far as the Riksdag is concerned, this is described as follows:

- gender distribution is to be equal in various bodies and contexts.
- gender equality work is to be integrated into activities and various processes.
- there is to be an internal culture that is characterised by respect and equal resources for both women and men.

<sup>1</sup> *Jämställdhet i riksdagen – en enkätstudie* (“Gender equality in the Riksdag – a survey study”), Josefina Erikson and Cecilia Josefsson, Department of Political Science, Uppsala University. *Riksdagsledamöters erfarenheter och upplevelser av jämställdheten i riksdagen* (“The experiences of Riksdag members of gender equality in the Riksdag – a series of interviews, Josefina Erikson, Department of Political Science, Uppsala University.

- the balance between official duties and family responsibilities is to be facilitated.
- both women and men are to take part in gender equality work.

Quantitatively, the Riksdag has a high degree of gender equality. There is a balanced gender distribution reflecting a percentage of 40/60 per cent, that is that the share of either of the sexes is at least 40 per cent. However, investigations that have been carried out show that there are deficiencies in the qualitative aspects of gender equality in the Riksdag. The action programme will therefore be focused on cultural issues such as the way people are treated, addressed and approached.

As previously, the programme concerns conditions in the work of the Riksdag rather than aspects of gender equality within various policy areas. The gender equality efforts of the Riksdag Administration, the party groups and the party secretariats are not covered by the action programme.

## **Development areas for the 2018–2022 electoral period**

### ***The role of an MP – treatment and experience***

The studies that were carried out during the last electoral period showed that many members of the Riksdag are generally satisfied with their working climate and the way they are treated in the Riksdag, but that there are problems with domination techniques and abusive treatment.

The studies also showed that threats and violations, primarily via social media, have become an increasingly significant factor affecting members in their assignment as MPs. This applied to both women and men, but the violations took different forms depending on gender.

The studies showed further that women in general feel that greater demands are placed on them and they are more worried about making mistakes. The answers to the interviews implied that the difference between the sexes may be a result of women placing greater demands on themselves, but the members who took part in the studies, both women and men, felt that the expectations placed on women and men differ.

*The gender equality group will:*

- arrange seminars on communicative strategies to increase sensitivity and enhance skills in order to promote a positive debating climate in the Riksdag;
- highlight how social media affect the pre-conditions for female and male MPs to carry out their duties and provide tips for how social media can be used more securely with the intention of reducing and minimising violations on the internet;
- propose ways of increasing general security for MPs;
- follow up the opportunity to perform practice debates in the Chamber that was offered to the parties after the elections in 2018;
- investigate ways of taking care of people who are subjected to abusive treatment and sexual harassment in the Riksdag;
- review information that is supplied about which situations can give rise to MPs contacting the occupational health service to obtain support.

## **Combining duties of an MP with family obligations**

Meeting the challenges of daily life also depend on the working environment and working conditions. According to surveys that have been carried out, the group consisting of younger MPs, regardless of their gender, felt that it was difficult to reconcile their work as members of parliament with family commitments more often than was the case in other groups. How the work of the Riksdag is organised as regards voting times, how meetings are scheduled and how services concerning child-minding, etc. are organised are therefore of interest.

*The gender equality group will:*

- urgently review the planning of the work of the Riksdag from the perspective of gender equality, particularly in the case of working hours;
- follow up that the forthcoming inquiry to review matters regarding the work of the Riksdag carries out impact assessments of its possible proposals from a gender equality perspective.

## **In-depth knowledge**

Measures carried out to promote a gender-equal Riksdag should be knowledge-based. Since the studies that were carried out with the members of the Riksdag during the former electoral period, a good picture has been obtained of how the members perceive gender equality in the Riksdag.

In order to make gender patterns in the work of the Chamber and the committees visible and increase awareness of them, in-depth studies of who speaks and what is said in the Chamber and in committees would be a valuable complement to the mapping that was carried out in the previous electoral period. It would also be valuable to study how women and men who are MPs are depicted in the media since this has an impact for people who would be interested in becoming elected representatives in the Swedish Parliament.

Knowledge should also be obtained by monitoring current developments and exchanging experience with other parliaments.

*The gender equality group will:*

- update statistics that highlight the work of the Riksdag from a gender equality perspective;
- get back to the Riksdag Board with proposals for in-depth research studies of debates in the Chamber and discussions in committees;
- get back to the Riksdag Board with a proposed research study of how female and male MPs are depicted in the media;
- arrange activities in the Riksdag to increase MPs' knowledge of the significance of gender for power and influence;
- arrange a conference for exchange of experience with parliamentarians from Nordic parliaments.

## Working procedures

On 30 January 2019, the Riksdag Board decided to establish a working group for gender equality. Representatives from all the Riksdag parties were to be included in the working group. The group would have an equal gender balance.<sup>1</sup>

The Board appointed the First Deputy Speaker as the Chair of the working group and the Second Deputy Speaker as the Deputy Chair. The Board also instructed the Secretary-General of the Riksdag to decide on administrative support and to establish the budget for the working group.

The working group is to draw up and then carry out the action programme established by the Board. The group may also get back to the Board with proposed decisions on further activities and measures which it considers are needed to implement the action programme. The working group will on an ongoing basis, at least once per term, report on its work to the Board.

Successful work with the action programme also requires broad support in the party groups. The MPs in the working group form a natural link in the process of obtaining broad support.

The working group is supported primarily by employees from the Riksdag Administration, but it may also be necessary to consult external expertise for support and inspiration.

However, gender equality efforts in the Riksdag are not only conducted by the working group for gender equality, but should also be integrated into all activities. The working group may serve as support and a point of contact for these efforts. For example, a special leadership course that also includes gender aspects of leadership will be arranged for the chairs of the parliamentary Riksdag committees and the Committee on EU Affairs.

<sup>1</sup> Following nominations from the party groups, the Speaker decided on the composition of the group.



Furthermore, the period for this action programme will partially coincide with Sweden's celebration of the advent of democracy 100 years ago. Here, there are several natural areas in common with the Democracy Centenary where we could work together. One of these is the fact that the Democracy Centenary Secretariat has been entrusted with the task of redesigning the Women's Room in the East Wing of the Riksdag.

## **Communication**

The activities of the working group will serve as an example of how a parliament can work to achieve the goal of being a gender-equal parliament. They will therefore be communicated both internally and externally.

*The gender equality group will:*

- draw up a communication strategy and a communication plan for this.

## **Follow-up**

At the end of the electoral period, the action programme will be followed up and evaluated by means of:

- discussions in focus groups on the various development areas in the programme;
- questions on gender equality included in the Riksdag Administration's regular service surveys;
- continuous follow-ups of activities carried out by the gender equality group;
- follow-up of members of the working group of their own ambitions regarding participation in the activities of the working group.





