The current situation of gender equality in Sweden – Country Profile

2013

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# Table of Content

Foreword ................................................................. 03

Management Summary ................................................. 04

1. How Swedish companies access the talent pool ......................... 05
   1.1 General participation of women and men in the labour market .... 05
   1.2 Part-time segregation of women and men .......................... 06
   1.3 Qualification level and choice of education of women and men ...... 07
   1.4 Under-/overrepresentation of women and men in occupations or sectors – "Horizontal segregation" .................................................... 08
   1.5 Under-/overrepresentation of women and men in hierarchical levels – "Vertical segregation" .............................................................. 10
   1.6 Gender pay gap ................................................................ 11

2. How to gain better access to the talent pool ................................. 12

3. Where companies find support to gain better access to the talent pool - Examples ............................................................. 15
Dear Reader,

We are happy that we have raised your interest in the EU-Initiative EQUALITY PAYS OFF. The initiative supports large companies in successfully adapting to upcoming labour market challenges: Due to demographic change as well as a stronger focus on service and knowledge intensive industries, Europe will face a significant shortage of (qualified) skills in the next decades.

To secure qualified labour, it will be of vital importance for large companies to diversify the pool of (potential) employees by gaining better access to the female labour force. The initiative supports companies in Europe to increase female participation, to support employees that involuntarily work part-time due to family obligations, to motivate students to enter atypical fields of education and to reduce horizontal\(^1\) as well as vertical segregation\(^2\). Consequently, the initiative contributes to a reduction of the gender pay gap in Europe.

The initiative covers all EU-28 countries, Turkey, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Serbia, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein – in total 34 countries. This country report serves as background material for workshops taking place in each country in the context of EQUALITY PAYS OFF.\(^3\) These workshops shall enhance knowledge exchange between business leaders and key decision-makers of participating companies. The quick and country-specific overview of the status quo will serve as a basis to explore starting points for each company to tap the female talent pool in a better way.

The country report is structured into four parts: After the management summary, Part 1 describes the status quo of gender equality in the Swedish labour market. Part 2 describes our recommended strategic approach to gain better access to female talent in the labour market and within a company. Part 3 lists initiatives of the public and private sector in Sweden that support companies in their ambition to enhance gender equality.

Further information on the EU-Initiative and its respective activities as well as on involved stakeholders can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/equality-pays-off.

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1 Horizontal segregation refers to the under-/overrepresentation of women and men in occupations or sectors
2 Vertical segregation refers to the under-/overrepresentation of women and men in hierarchical levels
3 The information on the website has been summarised in this country report. Detailed information can be found on the website: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/equality-pays-off
Management Summary

Demographic change as well as a stronger focus on service and knowledge intensive industries will lead to a significant shortage of (qualified) skills in Europe. While trying to fill the upcoming gap between labour demand and labour supply, companies can benefit from improving their access to the full talent pool by ensuring equality.

Currently, Swedish companies do not make full use of the existing female labour force potential. Five groups of indicators show the status quo in Sweden:

- The general **employment rate** of women in the Swedish labour market is the highest in the EU-27\(^4\), in Europe only in Iceland and Norway the rate is higher. It equals 71.8% and is thus significantly above the EU-27 average (58.6%) – also, the share of women actively looking for work (7.8%) is below the EU-27 average (10.6%).\(^5\)

- The rate of Swedish women **working part-time** (38.6%) is above EU-27 average (32.1%) – additionally, the female average part-time weekly working hours in Sweden (25.1 hours) are significantly above EU-27 average (20.2 hours).\(^6\)

- Attainment of secondary education is higher for Swedish women (76.9%) than the EU-27 average (70.9%), and also higher than the rate of Swedish men (75.5%). The same applies to college/university (tertiary education) attainment: The attainment rate for Swedish women equals 35.0% and thereby is clearly above EU-27 average (25.8%). However, the promotion of gender atypical fields of study still remains a main challenge.\(^7\)

- The under-/overrepresentation of women and men (**horizontal segregation**)\(^1\) is more pronounced regarding sectors and occupations in Sweden than in the EU-27 – thus it is necessary to motivate graduates to enter gender atypical sectors and occupations.\(^8\)

- The under-/overrepresentation of women and men on hierarchical levels (**vertical segregation**)\(^2\) is ambivalent – the proportion of women on supervisory boards (26.0%) is higher than EU-27 average (16.0%) while women in management positions are represented in a smaller share (27.0%) compared to the EU-27 average (33.0%).

**The gender pay gap** – in 2011 the overall difference in income between women and men lies at 15.8% in Sweden and is thereby slightly lower than the EU-27 average (16.2%).\(^9\)

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\(^4\) For statistical comparability and completeness, EU-27 data is used for all statistical indicators as EU-28 data is not available yet.

\(^5\) Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) (2013)

\(^6\) Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) (2013)

\(^7\) Eurostat Education and Training (2013)

\(^8\) Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) (2013)

\(^9\) Eurostat LFS 2013 (data from 2011)
1. How Swedish companies access the talent pool

In the following, we give a brief overview of the current situation of employment of women and men in Sweden in comparison to the overall EU-27 average.

1.1 General participation of women in the labour market in 2012

The employment rate of women in Sweden (71.8%) was the highest in the EU-27 and consequently above the EU-27 average (58.6%). Women participated in the labour market nearly to the same degree as men (75.6%) in Sweden. The difference between the male and female employment rate in Sweden was only 3.8 percentage points (pp) in 2012 and has been relatively stable since 2002. The development and acceptance of the female workforce has turned Sweden into the leading country with regards to gender equality within the European peer group. However, the employment rate gap between women and men increases by age group, i.e. with increasing age. Nevertheless, it remains very close together even in the age group of the 55 to 64 years old (7.5 pp in 2010).

Moreover, unemployment rates in 2012 were almost equal for men (8.5%) and women (7.8%), and both below the EU-27 average of 10.5% and 10.6%, respectively. However, the rate has increased since 2002 for both genders by 3.1 pp. The general participation rate (employment rate plus unemployment rate) for women in Sweden clearly exceeded the EU-27 average by 10.4 pp (79.6% vs. 69.2%) in 2012.

However, the rate of men still remained 4.5 pp higher. The negative developments in both employment and unemployment rates can partially by explained by the challenging economic situation the country faced due to the international financial crisis (real GDP growth decreased from 4.3% in 2006 to -5.0% in 2009, then back up to 3.9% in 2011).

![Figure 1: Labour market participation of women and men in Sweden in comparison to the EU-27](image)

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12 Eurostat 2013, Real GDP growth rate - volume
The data reflects the exceptional approach of the Nordic countries regarding family support combined with diversity efforts. It is common and viewed positively when both parents care for their children and, accordingly, the government as well as employers have institutionalised numerous work-life balance programs combined with incentives for young families\textsuperscript{13}.

1.2 Part-time segregation in 2012\textsuperscript{14}

Part-time rates in Sweden are constantly higher than the EU-27 average for both, men and women: 38.6\% of Swedish women use flexible work arrangements, which is higher than the EU-27 average (32.1\%). On average, female part-time employees work 25.1 hours per week, while female full-time employees work 40.2 hours per week which equals a 62.4\% share of full-time working hours. Hence, the chart indicates that Swedish women worked longer part-time hours than the peer group. This indicates a better integration of women in the professional working life and demonstrates the flexibility of the Swedish part-time arrangements. Part-time work increased between 2002 and 2012 by 6.3 pp.

![Part-Time Rate [%]](chart.png) ![Part-time working hours as share of full-time working hours [%]](chart.png)

Figure 2: Part-time segregation in Sweden in comparison to the overall EU-27

Part-time arrangements are well established in the Swedish business community as they go hand in hand with the extensive public benefits for young parents. They are entitled to 16 months of paid leave per child which can be split between the parents. Most of this time is compensated at 80\% of the most recent income. There are additional programmes and incentives to promote a high quality of family life. Consequently, Sweden has one of the highest fertility rates in Europe with an average of 1.9 children\textsuperscript{15}. In 2011, 51\% of children under the age of three and 95\% of children between three and school age were enrolled in formal childcare. These above EU-27 average childcare rates suggest a well developed infrastructure.

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\textsuperscript{13} \text{http://europa.eu/familyalliance/countries/sweden/index_en.htm}

\textsuperscript{14} \text{Source for statistical data (unless stated otherwise): Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) (2002, 2012)}

\textsuperscript{15} \text{http://europa.eu/familyalliance/countries/sweden/index_en.htm}
1.3 Qualification level and choice of education

Secondary education attainment of men and women has leveled over the last 10 years. The rate of women in college/university (tertiary education) is more pronounced (see figure 4). 35.0% of women have a higher (tertiary) education, almost 9.2 pp more than the EU-27 average and 9.7 pp more than their fellow male students.

However, there are also typical features of gender segregation within the choice of education. Particularly, the existence of "typical" female fields of study as well as "typical" male fields of study is predominant in Sweden, similar to the usual EU-27 pattern of distribution. Popular fields of study for women in Sweden are "Health and welfare", "Teaching, Training and education science" as well as "Agriculture and veterinary".

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1.4 Under-/overrepresentation of women and men in occupations or sectors – "Horizontal segregation"\textsuperscript{17}

The distribution of women and men across the sectors of the Swedish economy shows a strong gender bias. Only one of five most popular female sectors, namely "Wholesale & Retail" is among the top 5 male sectors (figure 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of women employed in</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>EU-27</th>
<th>% of men employed in</th>
<th>EU-27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Social Work</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>Wholesale &amp; Retail</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale &amp; Retail</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Professional, Scientific &amp; technical activities</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, scientific and technical activities</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Transportation &amp; Storage</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accumulated concentration 68.0 57.3

Accumulated concentration 58.2 57.8


Similarly, only one of the five most popular female occupations, namely "Legal, social, cultural professionals" (11.7%) is also among the top five male occupations. The remaining approx. 90% of the workforce display typical gender segregation, e.g. Personal service workers (22.2%, the highest figure – by far – among the female top five). The resulting horizontal segregation hinders the development of the Swedish workforce’s full potential. The distribution strongly resembles the general average structure in the EU-27.

\textsuperscript{17} Source for statistical data (unless stated otherwise): Eurostat Labour Force Survey (2013)
In order to compare the extent of horizontal segregation in Sweden with the overall EU-27 average, two horizontal segregation indicators are calculated: (1) The Sectoral Gender Segregation Indicator (SGS) and the (2) Occupational Gender Segregation Indicator (OGS):

- The extent of sectoral gender segregation (SGS) in Sweden (7.5 pp) is well above the EU-27 level (5.3 pp). Consequently, Sweden would benefit from motivating women to enter "typically male" economic sectors and men to enter "typically female" economic sectors.

- The extent of occupational gender segregation (OGS) in Sweden (5.4 pp) is significantly higher than the overall OGS of the EU-27 (4.6 pp). Consequently, Sweden should consider additional incentives for women to enter "typically male" economic occupations and men to enter "typically female" occupations.

**Horizontal Gender Segregation Indicators [pp]**

![Chart showing SGS and OGS comparison between Sweden and EU-27](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of women employed in</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>EU-27</th>
<th>% of men employed in</th>
<th>EU-27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal service workers</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>Legal, social, cultural professionals</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal, social, cultural professionals</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>Building and related trades workers</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and administration professionals</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Science and engineering associate professionals</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and keyboard clerks</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>Drivers and mobile plant operators</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching professionals</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Science and engineering professionals</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accumulated concentration | 57.2 | 48.9 |
Accumulated concentration | 42.0 | 35.2 |


Comparing the share of female employees that work in one economic sector to the share of male employees that work in the respective economic sector shows the extent of gender segregation in that specific economic sector. For instance, the sector “Health and Social work” is marked by a strong gender segregation: 26.7% of Swedish female employees work in the sector while only 5.2% of Swedish male employees work in the sector (difference in percentage points: 21.5 pp). The Sectoral Gender Segregation Indicator (SGS) reflects the weighted average difference in absolute percentage points (share of all male employees in an economic sector [%] minus share of all female employees in resp. economic sector [%]) across all economic sectors.
1.5 Under-/overrepresentation of women and men in hierarchical levels – "Vertical segregation"19

Women are underrepresented in economic decision-making positions in the EU-27 - Sweden is, however, in parts an exception. In 2012, 26.0% of Swedish board members were female (EU-27: 16.0%) as well as 27.0% of all managers in large companies and SMEs (EU-27: 33.0%). The development of women in economic decision-making positions between 2003 and 2010 was positive although the level of women in management positions is still below EU-27 average and only grew by 1.0 pp. One reason for the 8.0% increase of women in corporate boards is the corporate governance code which has been in effect since 2008. With its "comply or explain" guideline, it has established an effective instrument to closely monitor the organizational structures of public companies.

Despite the necessity of activating the full pool of valuable human resources, the share of women in decisive management positions has only been increasing very slowly over the last decade.

![Women in economic decision-making positions](image)

Figure 9: Women in economic decision-making positions

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1.6 Gender pay gap

In Sweden, the average female employee earns 15.8% less than the average male employee which is slightly below the EU-27 average (16.2%). Between 2006 and 2010, a modest reduction of 0.7 pp can be observed.

Unadjusted Gender Pay Gap [%]

![Chart showing unadjusted gender pay gap with EU-27 and Sweden data for 2006 and 2011.]

20 Source for statistical data (unless stated otherwise): Eurostat LFS 2013 (data from 2011)
2. How to gain better access to the talent pool?

More gender equality within the business sector and a reduction of the gender pay gap can only be sustainably realised if companies adopt a comprehensive approach including corporate strategy, management, operational implementation by business units and HR work organisation and monitoring (“strategic pillars”):

**CORPORATE STRATEGY – Establish gender equality as a part of the company’s DNA**

**MANAGEMENT and EXECUTIVES – Understand and position management as driver and role model**

**OPERATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION – Fields of action**

1. Raise awareness among high school students regarding the full spectrum of education and training options
2. Attract top talent
3. Strengthen the work-life balance
4. Promote the career advancement of women
5. Evaluate the remuneration system
6. Support the company’s internal and external communications

**WORK ORGANISATION Create 'modern' working conditions**

**MONITORING – monitor and follow up target achievement**

Focusing on one pillar will lead to partial improvements only.

**Corporate Strategy – Establish gender equality as part of the company’s DNA**

The corporate strategy sets the framework for doing business and determines the internal work culture. Experience shows that gender equality – in order to be sustainably established – has to be(come) a company rationale: The concept of gender equality has to be an integral part of the overall corporate strategy. This is the foundation for successfully addressing the gender pay gap within a company.

**Management – Understand and position management as driver and role model**

A management which is convinced of and fully endorses the company's strategy towards gender equality is vital to sustainably establish and live the principles of equality between women and men throughout the company and contribute to a sustainable reduction of the gender pay gap. The management is responsible for the implementation of the corporate strategy. Also, managers act as role models and multipliers within and outside the company.
Operational implementation – Business units and HR striving for more gender equality in daily work

- Business units are responsible for operationalising strategic targets regarding gender equality by actually implementing measures which have been agreed upon in their daily work, e.g. by offering internships. They contribute to a sustainable attraction, retention and development of employees.
- HR – as central point of contact for human resource issues of business units – offers strategic advice on how to sustainably address gender equality and provides instruments and processes to attract, retain and develop top talent, e.g. by designing regular evaluation processes.

There are six main fields of action for operational implementation:

- **Raise awareness among high school graduates regarding the full spectrum of education and training options** - To enlarge the potential talent pool, companies need to sensitishe high school graduates regarding the full spectrum of fields of education and hereby motivate them to also consider gender "atypical" fields of specialisation.
- **Attract top talent** – To attract top talent, companies need to build up a relationship with talented graduate students early on and show them how it is to work in their company. Additionally, they need to tap the dormant work force by mobilising women to start working.
- **Strengthen the work-life balance** – To retain the talent pool, companies need to motivate talents to continue working, to return early from leave and to facilitate the career advancement of employees with family care obligations.
- **Promote career advancement of women** - To promote the most qualified female employees, companies need to establish a culture and promotion process that equally honours male and female talent and institutionalise a systematic succession planning.
- **Evaluate the remuneration system** - To attract and retain female employees, companies need to evaluate and – if necessary – adapt their remuneration system to eliminate discriminatory practices.
- **Support the company’s internal and external communications** - To maximise the positive impact of their efforts to champion gender equality, companies need to communicate their actions enhancing corporate gender equality internally and externally.

Work Organisation – Create ‘modern’ working conditions

Often, workflows within the company are organised in a way which does not easily allow for necessary changes towards more gender equality. This especially refers to the flexibility of the working environment. In the context of this project, flexibility comprises working hours, workplace options and work arrangements. It is therefore vital to evaluate the organisation of current business activities and requirements systematically and identify room for change in favour of employees but beneficial for both parties (employers and employees).
**Monitoring – Monitor and follow-up target achievements**

To ensure that gender equality is taken seriously, companies need to monitor gender equality targets in the same way as financial targets. Monitoring should include indicators that measure company-wide progress regarding corporate efforts to enhance gender equality as well as the success of individual managers in promoting gender equality in their departments/teams. Additionally, it should be part of regular feedback talks with the top management.
3. Where companies find support to gain better access to the talent pool - Examples

In order to foster a sustainable change towards accessing the labour force potential of women in a better way, a series of public and private initiatives – with legislative and non-legislative focus - have been implemented in Sweden. In the following we give an overview over sample initiatives:

3.1 Legislative initiatives (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Website Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Föräldraledighetslag (Parental Leave Act)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.government.se/sb/d/5807/a/104985">http://www.government.se/sb/d/5807/a/104985</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Lagen om likabehandling av studenter vid högskolan (Equal Treatment of Students at Universities Act)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Microsoft%20Word%20Equal_Treatment_of_Students_at_Universities_Act.pdf">http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Microsoft%20Word%20Equal_Treatment_of_Students_at_Universities_Act.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Diskrimineringslagen (Discrimination Act)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.government.se/sb/d/3926/a/118187">http://www.government.se/sb/d/3926/a/118187</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Kollegiet för svensk bolagsstyrning (Swedish Corporate Governance Board)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.corporategovernanceboard.se/">http://www.corporategovernanceboard.se/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.2 Public non-legislative initiatives (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Website Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diskrimineringsombudsman (Discrimination Ombudsman)</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour (formerly of Integration and Gender Equality)</td>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>Protect women against discrimination at work, at school, at university or college, and at the shops, and when buying or renting a home</td>
<td><a href="http://www.do.se/">http://www.do.se/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Council on Women's Business Leadership</td>
<td>Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth</td>
<td>National and international players of the business community</td>
<td>Promote women’s entrepreneurship and leadership to increase economic growth in Sweden and abroad</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tillvaxtverket.se/ovrigt/womenup/starticwbl.4.2b7844c13856c63b4ce07.html">http://www.tillvaxtverket.se/ovrigt/womenup/starticwbl.4.2b7844c13856c63b4ce07.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jämställdhetsbonus (Gender Equality Bonus)</td>
<td>Government of Sweden</td>
<td>Young families</td>
<td>Encourage parents to share parental leave</td>
<td><a href="http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/13/07/15/8a48ff6.pdf">http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/13/07/15/8a48ff6.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCK Nationellet Centrum för Kvinnovrid (National Centre for Knowledge on Men’s Violence Against Women)</td>
<td>Uppsala University Uppsala University Hospital</td>
<td>Female victims of violence, General public</td>
<td>Increase knowledge of men’s violence against women in Sweden, and develop methods for the treatment and care of women subjected to violence</td>
<td><a href="http://nck.uu.se/en/">http://nck.uu.se/en/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.3 Private initiatives (examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Website Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Annas Jamstalldhetspris** (Anna’s Equal Opportunities Prize) | Employers’ Association of Swedish Banking Institutions, Financial Sector Union of Sweden | • Business associations  
• Labour unions  
• Businesses | Promote gender equality and equal opportunities within the Swedish banking and financial services sector | [http://www.bao.se/start/utbildning/C91/annas-jamstalldhetspris-2011](http://www.bao.se/start/utbildning/C91/annas-jamstalldhetspris-2011) |
| **Bästa arbetsplatsen för kvinnor** (Best Workplace for Women) | Veckans Affärers, Business and Professional Women, Sweden | • Business community  
• General public  
• Employers  
• Employees | Promote and reward good practice examples | [http://www.va.se/](http://www.va.se/) |
| **Dag för lika lön** (Equal Pay Day) | Business and Professional Women, Sweden | • Business community  
• General public | Raise awareness for the unequal treatment of women in the workplace | [http://www.bpw.se/](http://www.bpw.se/) |
| **Jämställdhetsindex Jämix** (Equal Opportunity Index) | Institute of Human Resource Indicators, National players of the business community as well as the civil society, Employers | • National players of the business community as well as the civil society  
• Employers | Establish guidelines for orientation in the business community | [http://www.nyckeltalsinstitutet.se/show.asp](http://www.nyckeltalsinstitutet.se/show.asp) |
| **Mångfald Charta** (Diversity Charta) | Novatis, Volvo, Lectia, Scandic, sodexo, Axfod, L’Oreal | • Business community | Advance the diversity of companies and organizations, develop a Swedish framework for diversity work in accordance with the European. Cooperate within the European network to disseminate our knowledge of diversity and develop the concept of diversity | [http://www.diversitycharter.se/](http://www.diversitycharter.se/) |
| **Sveriges Kvinn- och Tjejjourers Riksförbund, SKR** (Swedish Association of Women’s Shelters and Young Women’s Empowerment Centres) | 90 Local women shelter | • General public  
| **Tillväxtverket** (Promoting women’s entrepreneurship) | Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth | • National players of the business community | Foster and reward women’s entrepreneurship | [http://www.tillvaxtverket.se/ovrigt/englishpages.4.21099e4211fd8a87b80017332.html](http://www.tillvaxtverket.se/ovrigt/englishpages.4.21099e4211fd8a87b80017332.html) |