



Women's voices need to be heard – on housing and transport

Why?

The right to adequate housing is a human right as set down in **the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948**. It is also established in **Ch 1 par 2 of Sweden's Instrument of Government**:

“The personal, economic and cultural welfare of the individual shall be fundamental aims of public activity. In particular, the public institutions shall secure the right to employment, housing and education, and shall promote social care and social security, as well as favourable conditions for good health. The public institutions shall promote sustainable development leading to a good environment for present and future generations.”

The European Charter for equality of women and men in local life 2006

”Article 19 – Housing

(1) The Signatory recognizes the right to housing, and affirms that access to good quality housing represents one of the most essential human needs, vital to the well-being of the individual and his or her family.

(2) The Signatory recognizes further that women and men often have specific and distinct needs in relation to housing which must be taken fully into account, including the fact that: (a) On average, women have less income and resources than men, and therefore require housing that is affordable for them.....”

”Artikel 21 – Safety and Security

(1) The Signatory recognizes the right of each woman and man to security of the person, and to liberty of movement, and that these rights cannot be freely or equally exercised if women or men are unsafe or insecure, whether in the private or public domain, or if they feel unsafe or insecure.

Swe Q has analysed how international commitments and Swedish law as expressed above are applied in practice and have seen the necessity of formulating recommendations in the field of women's housing and transport requirements. There is a need for gender equal transport systems in related to housing areas, the labourmarket, professional training and active participation in society.



Swe Q
Sveriges Quinnoråd

National Council of Women in Sweden
Tankesmedja på kvinnors villkor

Swe Q:s Recommendations

1. Implementation laws, declarations and conventions declaring housing a human right

Offer housing with rights of tenancy at reasonable rates. Reduce the level of housing costs. Conditions for taxation and subsidies should be equal irrespective of rental modes. Hidden subsidies to ownership should be abolished. All planning and decision-making should be preceded by a consequence analysis from both a gender equality perspective as well as an environmental perspective to insure sustainable provision of energy.

2. Implementation of municipal planning for the provision of housing

Planning for the provision of housing must be revitalised with a focus on human rights and gender as laid out in current legislation and international commitments.

Women's participation must be ensured early in the planning process. Gender mainstreaming should be applied with reference to the guiding principles in articles 19 and 21 of the European Charter for equality between women and men in local life.

3. Gender mainstreaming of transport planning

Take into consideration the difference in life styles between men and women. The size of men's carbon footprints must be reduced. Research shows that women use public transport more than men. If men travelled the way women do, there would be fewer cars, the environment would improve and there would be fewer accidents.

Implement a new climate-smart mind set to increase safety and security. The difference between men's and women's means of transportation is a question of behaviour, not only of changing fuels.

Introduce request stops for buses at night in every Swedish municipality. Women's fear of assault must be met in many different ways. In Kalmar night buses can stop at request with exit through the front doors.

4. 50 % women at all levels of decision

The lack of citizen participation in the planning process, especially that of women, is important from a democratic point of view. Women's representation must increase, since inequality is an integral part of planning and decision making processes in society and since research shows us that the way women live their everyday lives and the choices they make are more environmentally friendly.

We also urge women in positions of power not to forget to apply a gender perspective.

5. Apply gender sensitive budget processes

In order to gender mainstream housing and transport the practice of including gender equality aspects in budgeting must be applied, in order for economic resources to be distributed justly in a non-discriminatory way.

6. Involve civil society

The role of the civil society has to have a stronger impact on authorities and politicians. There are a number of organisations with knowledge and experience important for the development of the society. Financial and human resources need to be made available for dialogue and consultation between civil society organisations, among them women's organisations, and planners, politicians, architects and constructors. Thus continuous cross sector work can take place at a national and at an international level round issues of housing, housing environment and transports with the participation of women.

7. Support municipalities and regions in finding new creative practices

New initiatives need to be taken to implement sustainable gender equality where housing and transport are concerned. Commission the Swedish Association of local Authorities and Regions to develop and support activities in their sectors to ensure equal living conditions for their citizens. Housing and transport must meet the needs of women and men, of girls and boys in the circumstances in which they live, within the framework of sustainable development.

8. Direct more resources towards research and statistics

More resources are necessary for research and better available statistics from Statistics Sweden in order to reach a better understanding of the housing situation today. More basic data is needed for the planning of future housing and to understand how the circumstances in which women live can be improved.

Some facts

In our society housing and planning is based on patriarchal norms and conceptions of the nuclear family as all pervasive. Real life provides a different picture.

For a long time there has been a severe shortage of flats to rent, depending in part on the financial imbalance between different structures of ownership, whether you rent your dwelling from a publicly owned housing corporation, or own it either cooperatively or individually. Rental housing is disadvantaged by the tax system. As a result of current rules for taxes and subsidies it costs 2000 SKR more a month to live in a newly built rental flat than in a newly built, privately owned single family home. See Report on taxes, the Town Hall group; Balanced financial terms, The Property owners Association, The Swedish union of Tenants, Sweden's Publicly owned Housing Company and The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning. Swedish housing policies have negative consequences for many people, but especially for women. One example is that in 70% of divorce cases, the man stays in the home, according to research carried out by Irene Molina, professor of Cultural geography at Uppsala University. Battered women who have been obliged to turn to a women's shelter have the greatest difficulty in finding a flat of their own.

Many older women worry about the future, looking for new types of reasonably priced housing that can provide comfort and security in old age. Important factors for them are company with others and service provided independently of cultural background or domicile.

Every local authority shall according to law plan the provision of housing with a view to creating the prerequisites for all inhabitants to live in good quality homes. The guide lines are to be voted on by the local council during every period of office. These plans are often unknown to citizens concerned.

Project year 1

In June 2014 Swe Q, The national Council of Women in Sweden, initiated a two-year project on sustainable development, financed by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Society, MUCF.

The first year, 2014-15, focused on issues of housing and transport from a women's perspective. Work undertaken resulted in our recommendations.

For further information see also the Facebook groups Housing and Transport on women's terms respectively. See also the Swe Q web page sve.q.se.

Project year 2

2016: Swe Q

- invites The Swedish Women's lobby to develop the recommendations further.
- continues contacts in previously selected towns and municipalities: Göteborg, Stockholm and Uppsala Malmö, Östhammar and Riga.
- cooperates with The Swedish Federation of Immigrant Women's Associations, RIFFI and other women's organisations.
- appoints a reference group to compile study material – a tool to inspire more women to participate in decision processes at different levels.

The project includes information activities and lobbying, also of relevant government ministers.

Contacts are made with the Swedish government in preparation of the regional UN Habitat III conference in Prague, March 2016 and the global conference in Ecuador, Oct 2016.

A sizeable conference is planned for December in Stockholm.



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Network for Gender Equality issues

Think tank/Advocacy on women's rights and influence