



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
20 January 2023

Original: English

Committee on the Rights of the Child Ninety-second session

Summary record of the 2671st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 17 January 2023, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Otani

Contents

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Sweden (continued)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties *(continued)*

Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Sweden (continued)
([CRC/C/SWE/6-7](#); [CRC/C/SWE/QPR/6-7](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Sweden joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Sweden**, replying to questions raised by Committee members at the previous meeting, said that an inquiry incorporating a child rights perspective and impact assessment was usually held before any new legislation concerning children was passed; indeed, children had been directly consulted in both the inquiry to submit a proposal for a national strategy to prevent violence against children and the inquiry into ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure.
3. Since the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been incorporated into Swedish law, there was a clear obligation for courts and legal practitioners to consider the best interests of the child in all matters concerning children. In 2022, the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden had developed digital resources for government agencies to assess the best interests of the child on an individual and societal level. County administrative boards had developed similar material for use in municipalities.
4. **A representative of Sweden** said that, under the government initiative to raise awareness of children's rights, support had been provided to municipalities to ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, enjoyed the right to participation in matters concerning them. Likewise, the strategy for systematic follow-up on the National Objective and Direction for Disability Policy sought to improve awareness of the rights of children with disabilities. The Swedish Agency for Participation played a central role in supporting government agencies, municipalities and regions in efforts to strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities, including children.
5. Persons with major functional impairments, including children, were entitled to personal assistance under the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments, which comprised 10 measures to ensure self-determination, independence, full participation and equality. Children with extensive care needs who were unable to live at home could be cared for by specially trained staff in a home shared with a maximum of 4–5 children; however, few children lived in such homes and their use had decreased over the previous 10 years. The legislation regulating personal assistance had been amended to ensure that persons with severe disabilities had the right to personal assistance for breathing aids and tube feeding, thereby reversing the decline in the number of children receiving personal assistance. Following the inquiry into personal assistance for children with disabilities, new legislation strengthening the right to personal assistance for persons with disabilities had come into force in January 2023.
6. **A representative of Sweden** said that the inquiry to submit a proposal for a national strategy to prevent and combat violence against children had taken note of existing reports and consulted numerous children, the majority of whom had been exposed to violence. By means of interviews and an anonymous survey, it had sought to gauge how they experienced the adult world, how they thought violence could be prevented and how support could be improved. No preliminary results were currently available; however, the results of the government-funded study on violence against children by the Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden would be published in 2023.
7. The National Board of Health and Welfare regularly conducted cross-sectoral reviews of injuries and fatalities, including among child crime victims, to provide the Government with a basis for effective measures. Having identified shortcomings in the detection of domestic violence by public authorities in its January 2022 report, the Board had been commissioned by the Government to support municipalities and regions in that connection.
8. **A representative of Sweden** said that there were few prosecutions in suspected cases of violence against children because such crimes were difficult to investigate: they were often committed in the home with no witnesses, and it was hard for children to explain and remember information about the crime. All prosecutors therefore received guidance on

handling crimes against children as part of their basic training and, for more experienced prosecutors, there was also further training on violence and sex crimes against children. Moreover, the handbook on crimes against children produced by the Swedish Prosecution Authority stated that every court must have a special prosecutor for investigations of such crimes. Special training was also provided to police officers investigating cases in which children were victims, witnesses or suspects, and interrogations of child victims were carried out almost exclusively by specially trained investigators.

9. **A representative of Sweden** said that the inquiry to review the protection under criminal law for children aged 15–17 years against sexual violations was ongoing, and the report would be submitted to the Government in November 2023.

10. **A representative of Sweden** said that preventing and responding to honour-related violence and oppression was a priority. It would be addressed within the framework of the 10-year strategy to combat men's violence against women (2016–2026), whose budget had been expanded significantly, through legislative measures, knowledge development, capacity-building for professional groups and awareness-raising among children.

11. **A representative of Sweden** said that, as part of that strategy, legislative changes had been implemented to strengthen legal protection against honour-related violence and oppression. Honour-based oppression had been made a criminal offence, punishable by 1 to 6 years in prison, and underlying honour motives were now considered an aggravating circumstance. A government inquiry had been launched to investigate how to better protect girls against so-called virginity testing and hymen reconstruction surgery, and its results were expected in July 2023. A specific child marriage offence had come into force in 2020, under which persons who allowed a child to enter into marriage or a similar relationship could be imprisoned for up to 4 years. Furthermore, a travel ban for children at risk of being married or subjected to genital mutilation abroad had been introduced at the same time.

12. **A representative of Sweden** said that knowledge development, capacity-building and a cross-sectoral approach were needed to address honour-based violence and oppression. In that connection, a permanent centre against honour-related violence was investigating such violence in the country and assessing efforts to combat it, and numerous government authorities were working together to prevent female genital mutilation. The Swedish Police Authority and the Swedish Prosecution Authority had compiled and reviewed all cases of female genital mutilation from 2015 to 2021 with a view to improving criminal investigations and case handling, and the relevant guidelines would be updated accordingly. The Government had introduced changes to the curriculum to raise awareness of honour-based violence and oppression within the education system, and it was supporting teachers to implement the new curriculum. Similarly, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society had launched awareness-raising campaigns on health and gender equality issues aimed at newly arrived and asylum-seeking children and young people.

13. **A representative of Sweden** said that the minimum penalty for exploitation of a child through the purchase of a sexual act had been increased from 2 weeks to 6 months' imprisonment. The provisions on rape and sexual assault had been expanded to encompass crimes occurring online and not in real time, and the minimum sentences for rape and sexual assault of a child had been raised. The inquiry to review the protection under criminal law for children aged 15–17 years against sexual violations would also assess regulations on the exploitation of children through the online purchase and procuring of sexual acts and suggest legislative amendments, if necessary.

14. The Swedish Police Authority had developed guidelines for the investigation of online sexual crimes against children. A national platform for handling abuse material had been established in 2022 to facilitate the identification of victims and categorize abuse material, and an information technology system for automated handling of reports of online sexual crimes against children was also being developed. In 2021, the Swedish Police Authority had launched a crime prevention initiative to improve parents and teachers' knowledge of online crimes against children and materials had been developed to raise awareness within schools.

15. The blocking of websites with child sexual abuse content was carried out on the basis of voluntary cooperation between the police and Internet service providers, under which 90 per cent of Internet users in Sweden were covered. There was no legal basis for the removal

of child sexual abuse material; however, if such content was found within Swedish jurisdiction, actions could be taken in accordance with provisions governing criminal investigations, such as the seizure of computers for forensic examination. Taking forward work on developing a European Union framework for measures against child sexual abuse online would be a priority during the country's forthcoming presidency of the Council of the European Union.

16. **A representative of Sweden** said that an evaluation by the Swedish National Agency for Education showed that, while progress had been made, efforts were required to improve students' and teachers' digital competence and access to digital tools. The Swedish National Agency for Education had been tasked with creating a national digitization strategy for schools for 2023–27, which was currently being processed by the Government.

17. With regard to the curriculum, the new sexuality, consent and human relationships class aimed to promote pupils' health and wellbeing, strengthen their ability to make choices and encourage them to critically analyse power structures and the presentation of relationships and sexuality in different media, including pornography.

18. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Swedish Safer Internet Centre, a European Union project run by the Swedish Media Council and BRIS – Children's Rights in Society since 2021, would be expanded in 2023 to include ECPAT International. The Swedish Media Council would coordinate work and act as a knowledge centre, BRIS would run a support line for children and parents, and ECPAT would operate a hotline to handle public reports of online child sexual abuse material.

19. The 2020 investigation by the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden into the impact of pornography on children had found that it was difficult to draw any conclusions on the link between pornography and unacceptable behaviour, including sexual violence. In the light of the clear lack of knowledge in that area, the Government had set up an inquiry to investigate abuse and violence in the production and distribution of pornography, the impact on the health of victims, access to health care and support, and links between pornography and crime.

20. **A representative of Sweden** said that work to promote equal opportunities for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons was a priority for the Government. One of the eight focus areas in the long-term strategy for young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons was their situation in health care and social services.

21. **A representative of Sweden** said that the National Board of Health and Welfare produced information and support material for patients and relatives, including material aimed specifically at intersex children over the age of 10 years.

22. In July 2022, legislation has been put forward to simplify the process of changing one's gender in the population register; nonetheless, the health-care system must continue to ensure that children and adolescents with gender dysphoria were taken seriously and offered adequate care.

23. There were several ongoing initiatives aimed at addressing the high rate of poor mental health and mental illness. In 2022, 1.7 billion Swedish kronor (SKr) had been allocated to municipalities and regions under the agreement between the Government and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions on mental health and suicide prevention. In the same year, the Government had also allocated SKr 50 million to initiatives to improve mental health and access to trauma care for asylum-seekers and new arrivals. Furthermore, a long-term initiative to increase preventive and health-promoting work in child and youth health care had been announced, with special measures for areas with socioeconomic challenges and a budget of SKr 50 million, which was to be doubled in 2024 and set at SKr 200 million annually from 2025.

24. Most regions had reported a general shortage of psychologists and psychiatrists, and a few regions had reported a shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists. The Government therefore planned to provide additional support to the relevant national committee.

25. No information was currently available on ease of access to medication for treating attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Patients were always assessed and could

only obtain such medication upon prescription by a physician. Furthermore, for medicines that were classified as narcotic substances, such as those used to treat ADHD, regular follow-up meetings were held at which the prescribing physician and the patient discussed their impact, including undesirable side effects.

26. The Swedish Food Agency had been tasked by the Government with convening and leading a national coordination group on breastfeeding issues, which collaborated with the National Breastfeeding Committee in protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding.

27. **A representative of Sweden** said that action had been taken in recent years, for instance by the Swedish National Agency for Education, to promote student health care. Legislation that was due to enter into force in July 2023 would provide additional health care and access to special education teachers for students with intellectual disabilities. The National Agency for Education and the National Board of Health and Welfare would implement a joint project aimed at ensuring early access for children and adolescents to health-care services.

28. **A representative of Sweden** said that the funding of the National Board of Institutional Care had been increased by more than SKr 500 million since 2015, and major steps had been taken to customize the care and treatment of children and adolescents. The National Board of Health and Welfare had been commissioned in 2019 to coordinate a pilot project on psychiatric health care in the regions with the National Board of Institutional Care. The assignment had included the development of guidelines on how responsibilities should be distributed between the National Board of Institutional Care, the social services and the regions. A report on the outcome would be submitted in September 2025.

29. Children were offered the opportunity to speak to members of the Health and Social Care Inspectorate, which also had an explicit responsibility to inform children and adolescents in residential care about their rights. A special hotline was available for the purpose. The National Board of Institutional Care had also established a supervisory unit and was investigating the possibility of facilitating internal complaints. The Swedish Agency for Public Management and the Health and Social Care Inspectorate had reviewed the situation in residential homes for children and adolescents in recent years, and the National Audit Office had decided to undertake an audit of the homes. The National Board of Institutional Care had been tasked with preventing conflicts that led to threats and violence against particularly vulnerable children and adolescents, who were encouraged to share their views on the methods used.

30. Since the Convention had been incorporated in Swedish law, the National Board of Institutional Care had updated all internal documents and formalized routines regarding assessment of the best interests of the child. A mandatory 10-week basic training course for all new employees of the National Board of Institutional Care had been introduced in 2022. Special units had been established to provide customized care for individuals with extensive neuropsychiatric impairments and who engaged in violent or self-injurious behaviour. Preliminary results showed that the number of seclusions in the units had decreased. Children and adolescents were informed of their right to appeal against a decision regarding seclusion, and the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act had been amended to ensure that young people were not secluded for more than four hours. The Swedish Agency for Health Technology Assessment and Assessment of Social Services had undertaken a pilot study with a view to identifying and evaluating alternatives to coercive measures such as seclusion.

31. An inquiry into social services of the future conducted in 2020 had led to the submission of proposals regarding children's rights under the Social Services Act. Measures had been taken to promote safe and secure alternative care for vulnerable children and to accord priority to children's right and needs. The Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act had been amended to guarantee children's best interests, as well as their safety, security and stability. Social welfare committees were required to consider whether there were grounds to apply for a transfer of custody when a child had been placed in the same family for two years. The National Board of Health and Welfare was required to make it easier for municipalities to secure access to family homes, and the Health and Social Care Inspectorate had been tasked with establishing a national register of privately and publicly run homes for residential care, to facilitate the safe placement of children and young people.

32. Municipalities were responsible for the reception, accommodation and education of unaccompanied migrant children. The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden had been tasked in 2016 with investigating the disappearance of unaccompanied children. The results had been disseminated to the competent authorities. The National Board of Health and Welfare ran a national centre on issues concerning unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents, and uniform regional procedures had been developed for addressing cases in which unaccompanied migrant children had disappeared. The Swedish Migration Agency had compiled information about trafficking in human beings on behalf of guardians of unaccompanied migrant children, and county administrative boards had been requested in 2022 to submit a report on municipalities' preparedness and capacity for unaccompanied children and adolescents and measures taken to prevent them from disappearing.

33. Ukrainian children could apply to the Swedish Migration Agency for the same benefits as asylum-seekers. Legislation that had entered into force in July 2022 was designed to promote burden-sharing between municipalities that hosted people fleeing from Ukraine. The Swedish National Agency for Education supported the enrolment of newly arrived students and sought the assistance of adults who spoke Ukrainian or Russian to provide pupils with tuition in their mother tongue. According to a study undertaken by the Agency, 80 per cent of children from Ukrainian refugee families were already enrolled or had applied for enrolment in Swedish schools.

34. The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden had been tasked with engaging in an ongoing dialogue with civil society organizations, with a view to exchanging knowledge of the current situation of children and adolescents from Ukraine.

35. **A representative of Sweden** said that the conditions governing seclusion measures were currently a great deal stricter and the permissible period for coercive measures had been drastically reduced. The Health and Social Care Inspectorate must be notified if a patient under the age of 18 years had been subjected to repeated coercive measures. The Government had allocated funds to the regions to secure the implementation of the new legal framework, and the Inspectorate had been instructed to supervise compulsory psychiatric and forensic care. A final report on the matter would be submitted in March 2025.

36. In its combined sixth and seventh periodic reports, the Government had stated that the National Board of Health and Welfare would submit a final report concerning children in psychiatric inpatient care in November 2022. That date had since been extended to November 2026. The Government funded actions by the regions to improve inpatient mental health care, to reduce coercive and intrusive measures in psychiatric hospitals, and to promote staff training in non-violent and non-coercive measures.

37. **A representative of Sweden** said that the amendments to the Parental Code adopted in July 2021 enhanced children's right to express their views on matters of custody and residence. Their views were usually heard during investigations conducted by a member of the social welfare committee. The child's views were then presented to a court unless such action was deemed to be inappropriate. For example, if the child was particularly sensitive or vulnerable, his or her views could be obtained by other means. Furthermore, children could now be heard without their custodian's consent.

38. With regard to custody disputes, children must be protected and should not be required to choose sides in the event of a conflict between their parents. Priority was given in the Parental Code to the best interests of the child in all matters concerning custody, residence and contact. Where the parents had reached an agreement and applied for judicial confirmation thereof, it was the court's responsibility to ensure that the matter was adequately investigated.

39. The court and the social welfare committee should undertake a risk assessment where a child might be harmed by an abusive parent. The possibility of violence, harassment or other violations must be taken into account when assessing the child's best interests. On the other hand, unfounded accusations should not prevent a child from having contact with a parent. The Government had ordered an inquiry to review the need for legislative amendments to ensure increased protection for children in such circumstances. The report on the inquiry was expected in late January 2023.

40. **A representative of Sweden** said that each municipality bore the ultimate responsibility for providing support for persons in need, such as emergency accommodation and long-term housing solutions. Such action could play a vital role in motivating homeless people who refrained from seeking community assistance to accept such support. The Government had adopted a strategy to combat homelessness for the period from 2022 to 2026. It had also instructed the National Board of Health and Welfare to conduct a national survey on homelessness in 2023. Sweden had signed the Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness in 2021.

41. The Government had appointed a commission of inquiry on children and young people in care. The aim was to prevent children from being placed in institutions, to promote their transition to community-based or family-based care and to support their social integration. A commission of inquiry on socially sustainable housing had proposed a mandatory requirement for municipalities to provide rental guarantees to families with children and to ensure that social considerations were borne in mind in the distribution of housing. The Government had instructed the National Board of Health and Welfare in 2022 to coordinate a survey and analysis of municipalities' use of emergency accommodation.

42. The number of children affected by evictions in 2021 had been the highest figure recorded since 2012. The Government had ordered the county administrative boards in 2022 to support the municipalities in their efforts to reduce evictions. It had also instructed the Swedish Enforcement Administration to collaborate with social services and landlords in all municipalities to prevent eviction, particularly of families with children. Progress reports would be published each year and the final report would be submitted to the Government in 2024. The housing allowance for families with children had been temporarily increased during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

43. **A representative of Sweden** said that an inquiry on statelessness in July 2021 had concluded that a system of automatic acquisition of Swedish nationality at birth might in some cases have a negative impact on children. For instance, the child's parents might have registered the birth with a competent authority in their home country. Furthermore, the processing of such cases would involve the Swedish Migration Agency and the Swedish Tax Agency and would entail higher costs. Only eight of the 55 bodies that had been consulted regarding the automatic acquisition of nationality for stateless children born in Sweden of a parent who had permanent resident status had supported the proposal.

44. Temporary residence permits for stateless persons had become the rule under the Aliens Act, as amended, in 2021, and stateless persons who had been born in Sweden, had resided in the country for at least five years and were under 21 years of age could acquire Swedish citizenship.

45. It had been proposed that the Citizenship Act should stipulate that persons aged between 16 and 67 years should be familiar with the Swedish language and Swedish society in order to acquire Swedish citizenship. That requirement would not be applicable to stateless persons under 21 years of age who were born in Sweden.

46. More than 29,500 stateless persons had been granted Swedish nationality between 2015 and 2021. The number of persons of unknown nationality who had been granted citizenship had increased from 489 persons in 2014 to 2,168 persons in 2021.

47. All children living in Sweden were entitled to education, even if they had not acquired a residence permit or were asylum-seekers. Children and adolescents under 18 years of age were also offered subsidized or free health and medical care.

48. In 2020, the Swedish Migration Agency had launched a mobile application to inform asylum-seeking minors about the asylum process and their rights and responsibilities within it. All asylum-seekers aged 15 years and over were required to take an introductory course on Swedish society and civics, preferably within 14 days of submitting their asylum application. The course was taught in group sessions and was divided into four modules: the asylum process; life in Sweden; Swedish legislation; and democracy, norms and values. The module on life in Sweden highlighted the importance of undergoing the free medical examination offered to all asylum-seekers. The module on Swedish legislation covered topics such as gender equality, children's rights, the prohibition of female genital mutilation,

corporal punishment and child marriage. Racism, antisemitism and discrimination were among the issues discussed under the module on democracy, norms and values. Material was made available in digital format to unaccompanied minors over 15 years of age and persons granted protection under the Temporary Protection Directive, including those fleeing the war in Ukraine. The Migration Agency would launch an information package for asylum-seeking children under 15 years of age in early 2023.

49. The Agency had updated its legal standpoints, or interpretations of how to apply relevant legislation, in response to the incorporation of the Convention into domestic law. It had also carried out a study on the quality of interviews with accompanied asylum-seeking children and had found that the best interests of the child were generally taken into account, children were treated with respect and asked appropriate questions, and the outcome of the interviews was satisfactory. However, the rationale behind rejections and approvals of applications often lacked clarity regarding the best interests of the child. The Agency would use the findings to improve the support documents prepared for case officers.

50. **Ms. Waltersson Grönvall** (Sweden) said that the Government took the issue of drug use among school populations very seriously. Unlike most countries in the European Union, Sweden had an alcohol retail monopoly that enabled the Government to strictly regulate the sale of alcoholic beverages.

51. **A representative of Sweden** said that the State-owned alcohol retail monopoly was driven not by profits but by a desire to raise public awareness of the dangers of alcohol consumption. The Government imposed a high tax on alcohol and restricted access to it by limiting the number and opening hours of points of sale. The minimum age for purchasing beverages with an alcohol content greater than 3.5 per cent by volume was 20 years, although the minimum drinking age in bars and restaurants was 18 years. According to survey results, alcohol consumption among schoolchildren had fallen significantly since the turn of the century, in keeping with the Government's objective for 2002–2025 of building a society free from narcotic drugs and doping, with reduced alcohol-related medical and social harm and reduced tobacco use.

52. **A representative of Sweden** said that all children had the right to a health-promoting and drug-free school environment and to comprehensive drug education. Inclusion was an important principle in the education system. As a result, most children with disabilities attended mainstream schools, depending on their parents' wishes. The Government was investing heavily in improving access to special education in all schools.

53. Under the Education Act, head teachers were required to report repeated or extended absences from school and ensure that, if necessary, they were investigated promptly. Distance learning was available as a last resort for children who were unable to attend school on account of social, medical or other challenges. In such cases, the aim was for school attendance to resume as soon as possible.

54. The Education Act stipulated that compulsory education must be of an equivalent standard throughout the country. To promote equality, the Government offered means-tested grants and was considering investments to improve the accessibility of learning materials. It was also taking steps to address the shortage of teachers.

55. In May 2021, the Ministry of Education and Research had unveiled a national plan to promote a safe and supportive study environment in schools. Furthermore, the Government had commissioned an inquiry to investigate the situation in schools and propose corrective measures if necessary. Teachers and support staff had an obligation to report evidence of abuse to an education organizer, which was in turn required to conduct a prompt investigation and take preventive measures where applicable. Within the Swedish Schools Inspectorate, the Child and School Student Representative was tasked with safeguarding the rights of schoolchildren, including by ensuring that schools complied with the provisions of the Education Act applicable to abusive treatment.

56. **A representative of Sweden** said that, pursuant to the Discrimination Act, all education providers and employers had a duty to take active measures to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of gender. Since 2017, it had been necessary for such measures to address all the grounds of discrimination

prohibited by the Act. Education providers were under an obligation to investigate and remedy all forms of harassment by children and teaching staff, including when the harassment occurred outside school premises, for example on social media.

57. The Living History Forum was a public agency responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the national plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime, and for conducting capacity training on racism throughout history for teaching staff and civil servants. The Forum, in cooperation with the Swedish National Agency for Education, had been running the Dembra programme to promote democratic preparedness against racism and antisemitism and to foster participation and critical thinking through a whole-of-school approach. In 2022 and 2023, the Forum and the Agency had been requested to develop a tool to strengthen democracy in the education system.

58. **A representative of Sweden** said that an inquiry appointed to assess the compliance of Swedish legislation and case law with the Convention had submitted a final report on the matter in 2020 and had found that the Discrimination Act was not in full compliance with article 2 (2) of the Convention as it did not prohibit all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions or beliefs of a child's parents, legal guardians or family members. The report had contained a proposal to strengthen domestic legal protection against discrimination, which had been submitted to the relevant authorities for consideration.

59. **A representative of Sweden** said that, in 2018 and 2019, at least half of children in Sweden aged between 12 and 18 years had participated in a sports activity more than once per week. In 2020, around 11 per cent of children aged 11 to 19 years had engaged in a municipal cultural activity such as a music lesson. Support for children's and young people's sports activities at the State level was estimated at SKr 1.5 billion, with additional funding provided at the municipal level.

60. Several initiatives were being undertaken to promote equal access to leisure activities for all children. Since 2008, the Government had allocated grants for cultural activities in schools. From 2021 to 2023, there were plans to allocate around SKr 25 million through the Creative Schools programme. Furthermore, the Government had proposed, in its budget for 2023, that an additional SKr 20 million should be allocated to organizations that ran activities for residents of socioeconomically deprived areas, in particular women and girls, with a view to preventing segregation.

61. **A representative of Sweden** said that the access to leisure activities of many children and young people, especially those who already found themselves in vulnerable situations, had been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a risk that, despite the lifting of restrictions, participation in such activities would not return to pre-pandemic levels. To encourage participation, particularly among children and young people from socioeconomically disadvantaged households, the Government intended to introduce a leisure card. It had set aside SKr 50 million in 2023 to develop the necessary infrastructure to support the activities accessible through the card and planned to invest in excess of SKr 700 million in 2024 and 2025.

62. **Ms. Waltersson Grönvall** (Sweden) said that the Government was waging a war against criminal networks, which had recruited children as young as 10 years old. There was a need to take preventive measures from the earliest possible age, which involved equipping social services, schools, the police and health professionals with appropriate tools.

63. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Government had requested the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention to conduct a study on how children and young people came to be involved in and exploited by criminal networks. The study would shed light on the relationships between younger and older people in such networks, recruitment methods and the characteristics of boys and girls who were attracted to criminal environments. The results of the study were expected to be presented in November 2023.

64. On several occasions, the Council had been instructed by the Government to carry out research on "strategic offences", whose commission by young people was the most reliable predictor of continued high-frequency offending. The most recent study, published in 2021, had concluded that the strategic offence was robbery for men and violence or threats against

public officials for women. The study had identified prosocial involvement, having a romantic partner and spending time with non-offenders as factors that helped young people to steer clear of criminality, while having problems at school, social exclusion, spending time with offenders, addiction and psychological problems all made it harder to avoid a life of crime.

65. In August 2022, a legislative proposal had been drafted to make it a punishable offence to involve minors in criminal activities. According to the proposal, which was under consideration by the Government, the child's consent would not absolve the adult from criminal liability, and there would be no requirement for the child to have committed a crime. The proposed penalty was imprisonment of up to 4 years.

66. Mediation was not an alternative to criminal proceedings. Rather, it was proposed as a supplementary measure to provide offenders with an insight into the consequences of their actions and to give victims an opportunity to process their experience. Municipal authorities were required to offer mediation to all offenders under 21 years of age. However, participation was voluntary for both offenders and victims. For perpetrators under 12 years of age, mediation could be suggested only if there were special reasons for doing so.

67. **A representative of Sweden** said that, to inform the design of crime prevention measures, the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden had been tasked with collecting the opinions of children and young people on how they could be protected from factors that drove them towards criminality. Since children and young people who committed crimes were often particularly in need of support to set their lives on the right path, the work of social services was crucial to crime prevention. Accordingly, the National Board of Health and Welfare had been requested to submit proposals on how to create more opportunities for open interventions without consent. The Board had put forward several proposals, including to lower the age limit for open interventions without a guardian's consent from 15 years to 12 years. The Board was also working with municipal authorities to strengthen their crime prevention efforts, for example through greater cooperation between schools, social services and the police.

68. An inquiry had been commissioned to assess possible improvements in how social services collected and exchanged data for the purposes of crime prevention and child protection. Among other matters, the inquiry would consider expanding the access of social welfare boards to criminal records during childcare investigations.

69. The Family Law and Parental Support Authority had drawn up an action plan for parental support to prevent crime, while the Swedish Agency for Health Technology Assessment and Assessment of Social Services had been requested to develop a scientific knowledge base on crime prevention to assist social services in their work on antisocial and criminal behaviour among children and young people.

70. **A representative of Sweden** said that, in accordance with the Young Offenders (Special Provisions) Act, persons under 18 years of age could be remanded in custody only in exceptional circumstances and where adequate supervision could not be arranged for the offender. It was a matter for the prosecutor and the judge to investigate whether adequate supervision could be arranged in each specific case. Minors were detained only when suspected of the most serious crimes, such as murder, kidnapping and serious violent or sexual crimes. Decisions ordering children to be held in pretrial detention were reviewed at intervals not exceeding two weeks until charges were brought. Courts were required to suspend the order where grounds for detention ceased to exist, and prosecutors could suspend the detention order at any time before the trial. Such orders were always subject to appeal.

71. Judges in Sweden were highly trained. The most common way to become a judge was to undertake the special training programme for judges, which involved years of practical experience in the courts, first as a legal clerk, then as a junior judge. A law degree and a minimum of two years' experience as a law clerk were required to enrol on the programme. Proceedings against young offenders had to be presided over by judges who were particularly suited for that work. Under the Young Offenders (Special Provisions) Act, preliminary investigations involving child suspects must be carried out by police officers or prosecutors who were suited to the task. The police and prosecution authorities provided training on how to handle such cases. Only lawyers who were registered with the Swedish Bar Association

or who worked at a law firm operated by members of the Bar Association were qualified to defend minors in court.

72. **A representative of Sweden** said that officials in several law enforcement agencies, including the Swedish Police Authority, the Swedish Prosecution Authority and the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, had received training on the Convention in 2019 and 2020. Nearly all prosecutors had been trained. The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden had compiled a database of case law related to the Convention from national and international courts, including courts in other Nordic countries. The database was regularly updated and currently contained 300 judgments from 18 courts.

73. The Government worked hard to repatriate Swedish children from refugee camps in north-eastern Syria. Swedish consular officials had conducted seven visits to the Rawj and Hawl refugee camps since October 2020, and the large majority of children there had been returned to Sweden along with their mothers. Responding to the question related to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, she wished to clarify that voluntary defence organizations were regulated by law and that persons under 18 years of age were not trained for combat or recruited into the armed forces.

74. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Government intended to amend its goal to that of generating all energy from fossil-free, rather than renewable, energy sources by 2040, in order to include sustainable but non-renewable energy sources. To achieve that target, the Government had increased the budget allocation for adapting infrastructure to promote the use of electric vehicles and encouraging innovation to reduce industrial emissions. An expansion of nuclear power generation was being planned. As of 2021, approximately 60 per cent of electricity in Sweden was generated from renewable sources and 90 per cent was generated from fossil-free sources. The Government had therefore exceeded its target of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2020.

75. Under the Climate Act, the Government was required to take measures to protect current and future generations from the harmful effects of climate change and to devise an action plan every four years. Regular meetings on climate change were held with civil society, including youth organizations, to ensure that their voices were heard. Youth councils met twice a year to discuss environmental and climate policy.

76. **A representative of Sweden** said that teaching on the environment and sustainable development was part of the school curriculum. It covered issues such as how to create a sustainable society and how to live and work in a sustainable manner.

77. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Climate Policy Council was an independent body of experts that ensured the alignment of the Government's policy with the established climate goals. It was also responsible for monitoring the effects of climate policy on society as a whole, identifying policy areas that required further action, developing ways of achieving short- and long-term targets in a cost-effective manner and fostering public debate on climate policy.

78. **Mr. Gudbrandsson** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that he wished to know whether the State party was continuing its multisystemic therapy programme or had plans to implement any other programme that avoided placing juvenile offenders in institutions. He wondered whether the Government intended to introduce legislation on the *barnahus* model.

79. **Ms. Todorova** (Country Task Force) said that members of the Committee had met with children whose parents were in prison. Those children had said that they needed more counselling, visitation rights and support in accessing education. She would be interested to hear whether debate was ongoing among health-care authorities in Sweden on whether to allow self-identification as a basis for gender assignment. Turning to the issue of violence, she asked why the Government had a strategy to combat male violence against women, rather than gender-based violence more generally.

80. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** (Country Task Force) said that she wondered whether inquiries into intrusive operations carried out in psychiatric hospitals were ongoing. She wished to know what measures had been taken to ensure that all children who had been victims of discrimination or bullying in schools were aware of the assistance available and that such assistance was accessible to all.

81. **Mr. Nelson** (Country Task Force) said that he would be interested to hear why the State party continued to make frequent use of solitary confinement and whether the Government intended to cease the practice. He was concerned that lowering the age of criminal responsibility to address the issue of child recruitment into criminal gangs would shift the focus onto children rather than adults who recruited them and that, if children were detained as a result, they would face further exposure to gangs in prison. He urged the Government to consider the matter very carefully before taking such a drastic step.

82. **Mr. Van Keirsbilck** said that he would like to know whether Sweden had measures in place to trace the families of unaccompanied child refugees from Ukraine in order to reunite those children with their families after the conflict. He would be interested to learn how many children of Swedish origin remained in Syrian refugee camps, when they would be repatriated and what support was offered to children in the camps. He wondered whether the policy of separating children from their mothers upon repatriation was still in place, whether mothers were detained upon their return to Sweden and, if so, whether mothers were reunited with their children promptly after their release.

83. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** said that he would be interested to hear whether a policy was in place to promote inclusion of children with disabilities and whether the State party intended to invest in reasonable accommodation in the mainstream education system. Turning to mental health, he asked whether the State party's policy was to prioritize non-pharmaceutical treatments for mental issues such as depression and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

84. **Ms. Aho** said that she wondered what mechanisms were in place for children who did not attend school to report any violence that they had suffered. She would appreciate information about sexual and reproductive health services in schools and measures to combat early pregnancy.

85. **Ms. Waltersson Grönvall** (Sweden), thanking the Committee for a fruitful and informative dialogue, said that the appointment of a minister with responsibility for child rights policy was an indication of her country's commitment to the implementation of the Convention. Sweden would continue to make progress in that area and ensure that children's rights received due attention during the Swedish presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.