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**LET WOMEN OUT AND MEN IN.  
THE SWEDISH GENDER EQUALITY POLITICS  
ON LABOUR MARKET AND IN FAMILIES**

The aim of this article is to analyze the Swedish gender equality politics and its influence on the gender equality on the Swedish labour market and within families in period between 1970s and 2000s. Problems such as wage differentials, occupational sex segregation and unequal distribution of paid and unpaid work between the sexes were faced from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century up to 1960s. In order to address those issues gender equality politics was launched in 1970s including enacting of the law on separate taxation and law on gender equality. Moreover, a special family politics was launched encouraging men and women to divide childcare and housework equally. On one hand Swedish gender equality politics contributed to the growth of women's participation in labour market, to minimize wage differentials and it also made sex distribution between the occupations and at the leading positions in companies and institutions more equal. Moreover, this politics led to more equal distribution of unpaid work between men and women at home. On the other hand it must be pointed out that none of these problems has been completely solved. Women's wages are still generally lower than men's and women and men tend to work in different sectors. Women still take greater part of parental leave and tend to do the bigger part of unpaid work. Although a significant change in the level of gender equality has been made since 1960s, which can be considered a success of the Swedish gender equality politics, there is still much that needs to be done in order to achieve gender equality both on labour market and in families.

Key words: gender equality politics, men and women, labour market, family, Sweden

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of gender equality seems to be one of the most important social problems in many western countries nowadays. There are several types of equality based on ethnic, religion and age, but gender equality seems to take a special place among them. Gender appears to be one of the most important features according to which we tend to segregate people. Apart from that, gender equality politics issued by a country may be an important factor influencing comfort of living of the citizens and contributing to balanced development of the country. Therefore the gender equality politics seems to be an interesting and important realm to study.

The aim of this article is to analyze the Swedish gender equality politics and its influence on gender equality on the Swedish labour market and within families. Sweden was

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pronounced the most equal country in the world by the United Nations in 1995 (Fürst 1999: 8). It should be emphasized that the Swedish gender equality politics is a result of feminism and women's movement which started in Sweden in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued in the so called "three waves" in the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. Feminism triggered the process of reforming the society by pointing out women's unequal situation and their subordinate position in relation to men. Apart from that it proposed and carried out changes struggling for an equal society, which led to today's Swedish gender equality politics.

What measurements has Sweden taken in order to increase gender equality among its citizens? Is Sweden an equal country today? If not, what can be improved? Since the topic of gender equality politics is very broad, only some aspects will be discussed. In this article the Swedish gender equality politics is analyzed within two realms: labour market and family between years 1960s and 2000s. Since it is not the aim of this article to analyze gender system or distribution of power between the sexes within politics, these topics will be omitted. First the social-political background is sketched together with the problems faced by men and women on the Swedish labour market and within families from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, focusing on 1960s, are briefly presented. Then the measurements taken by the state in order to achieve gender equality are presented, followed by the analysis of their effectiveness. In the end conclusions on the efficiency of the Swedish gender equality politics on labour market and families are drawn.

## 2. THE SOCIAL-POLITICAL BACKGROUND AND ORIGINS OF THE SWEDISH GENDER POLITICS

### 2.1. THE DEFINITION OF GENDER EQUALITY

Two notions need to be defined while discussing the Swedish gender equality politics: gender equality (Swedish: *jämställdhet*) and equality of rights (Swedish: *jämlikhet*). Gender equality means that women and men should have the same rights, duties and possibilities within all the important realms of life (Glans 2008:16). In Swedish this notion is often confused with equality of rights (Swedish: *jämlikhet*), which has a wider meaning as it implies that all people have the same value irrespectively of their sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical handicap and religion (Glans 2008: 16).

Gender equality consists of quantitative and qualitative aspect. The quantitative aspect focuses on equal distribution of goods and power between the sexes as well as on equal participation of men and women in all important aspects of life, whereas the qualitative aspect concerns attitudes and opinions towards equal value of sexes<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The first-wave feminism (the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1920s) aimed at giving women greater economic, politic and social rights such as right to be educated, to work and to vote. The radical second-wave feminism (1960s–1970s) questioned the traditional gender roles, which the most important consequence was the increasing number of women who participated in labour market and emphasizing that men are also responsible for home and family. The third-wave feminism (since 1980) emphasizes gender equality on labour market, in politics and private life (Lyttkens 1973, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> This article will focus mainly on the quantitative aspect of Swedish gender equality politics.

## 2.2. THE AIM OF THE SWEDISH GENDER EQUALITY POLITICS

The aim of Swedish gender equality politics was stated in the proposition to *Jämställdhetslagen* (Law on gender equality). It claims the assurance that women and men have the same power to form the society as well as his/her own life and that they have the same rights, duties and possibilities within all important aspects of life (Englund 1997: 72). Within this aim there are four intermediate goals included: equal distribution of power and influence on the society, economic equality, equal sharing of unpaid housework (including the same responsibility for children) and inhibition of sexual related violence (Larsson and Jalakas 2008: 43).

In 1970s and 1980s the Swedish gender equality politics focused mainly on achieving gender equality on the labour market and within families, whereas in 1990s the emphasis was put on the gender system (Swedish: *genusystemet*) and power relations between the sexes. The importance of gender politics for Sweden illustrates the fact that Sweden has accepted *gender mainstreaming* – a strategy stating that gender equality should be perceived as an integral part of any social policy or other activity rather than a separate question (Glans 2008: 134).

### 2.2.1. THE SOCIAL-POLITICAL BACKGROUND AND THE ORIGINS OF SWEDISH GENDER EQUALITY POLITICS FROM THE BEGINNING OF 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TO THE BEGINNING OF 1960S

Even though the Swedish gender equality politics developed most intensively in 1970s, the social changes that contributed to this politics occurred earlier. In this section I will briefly present the changes in the Swedish society which lasted from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century up to 1960s and which eventually led to launching of the gender equality politics in 1970s.

The industrialization and urbanization in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were the main factors contributing to changes in Swedish society, including the change of the traditional view on men and women. This period was dominated by women's struggle for social, economic and political rights. Officially incapacitated, with limited access to education and labour market, women were subordinated to and economically dependent on their male relatives. Women's position in the society and the ideological background of enlightenment ideas concerning people's equal rights created an excellent ground for the first wave of feminism. This social movement resulted in giving women among others right to vote, gain education and work and thus was the first step to equal society.

Industrialization and urbanization caused also changes in the model of the family. As a result of migration to cities, the family model changed from the multi-generational peasant family to nuclear family model. In the 1930s, mostly due to the worldwide economic crisis, the number of children born in Sweden decreased dramatically. In order to counteract this and to establish a welfare society, social care was developed<sup>3</sup> and special rights for mothers were introduced<sup>4</sup>. 1950s was a period of so called ideal housewives, whereas men were

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<sup>3</sup> More information about these privileges can be found in: Fürst 1999: 9–10.

<sup>4</sup> In 1938 *moderskapspenning*, a special allowance for mothers, was introduced and in 1948 common child allowance, paid to mother s, was introduced. In 1955 mothers got right for 3 months paid leave in connection to childbirth (in 1962 it was prolonged for 6 months).

expected to provide for their families economically. In 1960s the national economy was developing intensively. That resulted in increased demand for workforce (Plantin 2001: 24) and the ideal housewife model was questioned as the number of employed women increased. In 1960s the social demand for equal rights was a fact.

Summing up, the period from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 1960s changed views on men and women, their gender roles and rights as well as family patterns. This period was dominated by women's increased involvement in labour market, resulting among others in increased demand for equal social and economic rights with men.

### 3. THE SWEDISH GENDER EQUALITY POLITICS

#### 3.1. PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY MEN AND WOMEN ON THE LABOUR MARKET FROM 1960S

Along with the fast development of the economy and growth of the public sector, more and more women started to work outside home in 1960s (Schmitz 2002: 14–25). Women had better access to education and that made them a demanded workforce. Their education raised also their awareness of the inequality between the sexes on labour market and at homes. In this section I will briefly present the most important problems faced by women and men on labour market and in families in 1960s and 1970s.

##### 3.1.1. WAGE DIFFERENTIALS BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

Until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century gender appeared to be one of the significant factors determining one's salary<sup>5</sup>. Wage differentials seem to be a quite complicated problem as they are influenced by factors such as employee's education, age, job seniority, sector of employment and occupation. Because of that, there are two possible approaches for calculating the relation between women's and men's wages. One of them is based on statistical standard weighting and takes into account the factors mentioned above, whereas the other approach does not take into account the factors mentioned previously. It can be assumed that wage differentials between men and women could also have been influenced to some extent by employer's attitudes. Until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a common excuse for unequal wages was belief that a woman can be supported by her husband, who was perceived as family bread-winner. Eva Schmitz mentions in her dissertation *Systemskap som politisk handling. Kvinnors organisering i Sverige 1968 till 1982* ("Sisterhood as political action. Organizing of women in Sweden from 1968 to 1982") that in 1950s women's average wage was ca 70% of men's wage (Schmitz 2007: 95).

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<sup>5</sup> In *Makt att forma samhället och sitt eget liv* ("The power to form the society and one's own life" – this rapport has not been published in English and its title is translated by me. The same approach is applied to other publications I refer to further in the article, if they has not been published in English), an official government's rapport on gender equality, it is stated that in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century different wage rates for men and women were imposed on employers and that this procedure was legal until 1960s ("Jämställdhetspolitiska utredningen" 2005:160).

Women's increased participation in labour market brought a demand for the equal wages as this could enhance women's economic independence from men and hence it could increase gender equality in the Swedish society.

### 3.1.2. SEGREGATION OF SEXES ON THE LABOUR MARKET

Another problem faced by women and men on the labour market was occupational sex segregation. Sex segregation occurs when an occupation is dominated by one of the sexes. An occupation, in which there are over 60% of representatives of one sex is considered to be sex segregated, whereas an occupation in which there are 40–60% of representatives of one of the sexes is considered to be sex-balanced. There are two kinds of sex segregation: primary and secondary segregation. The primary segregation considers an unequal division of paid and unpaid work, whereas the secondary segregation considers unequal distribution of sexes at the labour market<sup>6</sup>. The secondary segregation can be divided into three types: horizontal, vertical and intern segregation (“Utredningen om den könssegregerade svenska arbetsmarknaden” 2004: 42). The horizontal segregation means that men and women tend to choose different occupations, vertical segregation implies that men and women tend to have different opportunities to be promoted within a company or institution, whereas the intern segregation means that they are given different types of tasks and are responsible for different areas within the same company<sup>7</sup>.

Horizontal sex segregation of the labour market in Sweden was a phenomenon that was observed as early as in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Women worked mostly in occupations related to housework such as maids and cleaners, but also as shop assistants and teachers of young children (“Utredningen om den...” 2004: 29–36). Invention of the telephone and the telegraph widened the range of women's occupations as more and more of them worked in the office. Among men the most popular profession was farmer (“Utredningen om den...” 2004: 36). In 1960s labour market was still sex segregated<sup>8</sup>. That seemed to be a consequence of limitation of women's access to some professions<sup>9</sup>. In the 1960s women were employed mostly within the intensively developing public sector, whereas men dominated in the private sector. Vertical sex segregation of labour market was emphasized in 1990s. In 1990 *Maktutredning* (“Rapport on power”), an official government rapport on power between the sexes was published showing that women are underrepresented within influential areas such as for example economic life (Fürst 1999: 57). Gender equality politics shifted in 1990s from emphasizing women's and men's equal right to work to emphasizing women's and men's equal access to managing and leading positions in companies and public institutions.

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<sup>6</sup> In this section only the secondary sex segregation is discussed, whereas the primary sex segregation is discussed in section “Family and its influence on labour market”.

<sup>7</sup> Because of the article limitation only horizontal and vertical segregation will be discussed.

<sup>8</sup> In 1970 only 7% of all working women and only 4% of all working men had a profession that was not sex segregated (Jansson, Pylkkänen and Valck, 2003: 12).

<sup>9</sup> Women were not allowed to work in public institutions until 1925 when Behörighetslagen (1925, Law on qualifications) was accepted. This law stated that women could work in public and state institutions.

To sum up, in 1960s and 1970s women and men tended to work in different branches. Such a situation was caused to some extent by the law that was in force at the time, but also by factors such as attitudes and traditions. Moreover, women tended to earn less than men and their access to leading positions was limited. These factors contributed to increased necessity for introduction of measurements in order to increase equality between the sexes on the labour market.

### 3.2. FAMILY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE SITUATION ON THE LABOUR MARKET

The Swedish gender equality politics includes not only pushing women outside into labour market, but also encouraging men to participate to a greater extent in family life and housework in order to keep balance between the sexes (“Jämställdhetspolitiska utredningen” 2005: 250). Thus it is important to point out that gender equality politics concerned not only women, but also men. Moreover, women’s increased employment extorted changes also in the way housework and childcare were shared between the partners. In this section I will briefly present the new family situation in 1960s and the problems women and men faced on the family field.

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century mostly women were perceived as the parent mainly responsible for home and childcare, whereas man’s most important task was to support family economically. The consequence of this division of responsibilities was that men and women had different gender roles. These gender roles resulted in women’s limited access to labour market and, as Lars Plantin points it out, in man’s limited contact with his children (Plantin 2001: 18). These gender roles meant also that it was mostly women who did unpaid work at home, whereas men had paid work outside their homes. However, such a family model could no longer be applicable in the new situation that occurred in 1960s, when more and more women became employed. The previous model of sharing the housework needed to be reconsidered as a result of women’s increased participation in the labour market. Apart from that, it was considered that the state should overtake a part of childcare, for example in form of kindergartens which, as it was demanded, should be numerous, good and available for all<sup>10</sup>.

As Helena Hill points it out, another important consequence of women’s increased employment was, the debate on gender roles in 1960s (Hill 2007: 42). The traditional gender role models were questioned and perceived as roles imposed on men and women by the society (Fürst 1999: 11). An important contribution into the debate was brought by Eva Moberg’s article *Kvinnors villkorliga frigivning* (“Women’s conditional emancipation”) in which the author pointed out that women’s emancipation was only partial. The society gave woman its consent to be employed, but only as long as she perceived her role as mother as the most important one (Nyström edit. 2005: 32). The author found it also necessary to change the father’s role in order to achieve gender equality.

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<sup>10</sup> This was one of the demands put forward by Grupp 8, a women organization that played an important role in Swedish women movement in 1960s (Schmitz 2001: 26).

As it is described above, women's increasing employment had significant consequences both for the traditional gender roles and family model. The society started to perceive that not only women but also men should be responsible for housework and childcare. In order to make it possible for parents to combine paid work with the childcare, it was considered necessary to build more available kindergartens.

### 3.3. SUMMARY

The Swedish gender equality politics has developed as a consequence of the problems experienced by men and women on the labour market as well as changes in the family model in period from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until 1960s. The most common problems experienced by men and women on the labour market at that time were wage differentials between women and men, sex segregated labour market and unequal access to leading positions in the companies. Moreover, the traditional gender roles were questioned and it was found necessary to reconsider the traditional sharing of housework and childcare between the partners. These factors caused demand for greater gender equality both on the labour market and in families.

## 4. THE STEPS TAKEN IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY ON LABOUR MARKET AND IN FAMILIES

Since 1970s the state has taken several steps in order to cope with the growing social demands for gender equality on the labour market and in families. Among them the most important were introduction of laws on individual taxation and on gender equality. Several organs of the government were established to control that these laws were followed. Another important measurements taken were introduction of parents' leave and increase of the number of kindergartens. In this section I will briefly present the steps taken in order to implement gender equality on the labour market and in families.

The individual taxation law was introduced in 1971 and it established the separate taxation for husband and wife. This reform was important as it made it more profitable for women to work. Not only did it emphasize woman as an economic individual, but it also accentuated the fact that even she shared the responsibility for economic maintenance of the family.

Another important step taken in order to establish gender equality was introduction of Law on gender equality in 1980 with later amendments. This law concerned men's and women's equal rights on the labour market and is considered to be a huge leap on the way to achieve gender equality. In 2009 it was annexed in Law against discrimination. The employer was obliged to promote and try to establish gender equality in his/her company. In order to do this, each employer who employed more than 9 employees (after 2009's amendment and annexation in Law against discrimination, each employer who employed 25 employees) was obliged to prepare and follow annual plans for achieving gender equality

(after 2009's amendment, such a plan has to be prepared every third year). They were also obliged to ensure that equal wage was paid for equal job regardless of the employee's sex as well as to analyze and remove unjustified differences in wages. It was forbidden to discriminate the employees or applicants for a job because of their sex. Furthermore, a positive special treatment was allowed e.g. in cases where two job applicants had the same qualifications, the applicant of the underrepresented sex should be given the job. Sexual harassment was forbidden and an important connection was made between work and family life as the employer was obliged to facilitate for employees to combine work with their family life.

In order to ensure that the law on gender equality was followed, a special institution i.e. *Jämställdhetsombudsmannen (JämO)* (Ombudsman for gender equality)<sup>11</sup> was called into existence. Ombudsman's task was to control that the law on gender equality was followed by the employers and to support them with necessary information and advice. If an employee felt discriminated because of his/her sex, he/she could have turned to *JämO* for help. *JämO* was replaced with *Diskrimineringsombudsmannen*<sup>12</sup> (Ombudsman for discrimination) in 2009. Nowadays the institutions entitled to prevent discrimination because of sex are: *Jämställdhetsministern*<sup>13</sup> (Minister for Gender Equality), who together with *Jämställdhetsenheten* (Unit for Gender Equality) coordinates the government's gender equality policy as well as *Diskrimineringsombudsmannen*. Moreover, in each county there is appointed an expert for gender equality.

Gender equality on the labour market and in families is closely related. It was pointed out that sharing housework between the sexes and obliging the state to take over part of the responsibility for the childcare, in form of kindergartens, would lead in consequence to greater gender equality both at home and on the labour market. In 1976 a decision to build more kindergartens was made. In 1970s a so called *pappapolitik* (daddy-politics) was launched as a consequence of the debate on gender roles in 1960s. This policy attempted to encourage fathers to participate in the family life and childcare to a greater extent. It consisted of laws and social campaigns aiming at encouraging fathers to take out parental leave, i.e. *papa-kom-hem* (daddy-come-home) campaigns. Combining *pappapolitik* with the gender equality politics created the so called double emancipation. This double emancipation included encouraging women to work outside home and men to look after children ("Jämställdhetspolitiska utredningen" 2005: 248). In this way both sexes should have been emancipated from their traditional gender roles.

In 1974 parental leave was introduced. It can be perceived as a milestone on the Swedish way towards equality in parenthood between the sexes because of the fact that until

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<sup>11</sup> However, it should be pointed out that this was not the first organ established to promote gender equality. In 1972 *Delegationen för jämställdhet mellan kvinnor och män* (Delegation for gender equality between women and men) was established as a part of Government Offices. Its main task was to promote women's rights on labour market (Füerst, 1999: 17).

<sup>12</sup> Today (January 2011) *Diskrimineringsombudsmannen* is Katri Linna.

<sup>13</sup> Today (January 2011) *Jämställdhetsministern* is Nyamko Sabuni. In January 2009 the Department for Gender Equality was dissolved and responsibility for gender equality issues was moved to the Department of Education. With gender equality questions works also the Department of Justice (Swedish government's website, [www.regering.se](http://www.regering.se)).

then only motherhood was supported by the state. Maternity leave was replaced by parental leave which gave right to both mother and father to have 180 days' leave during which he/she would receive 90% of his/her income (later this was lowered to 80% of income). This leave was prolonged in the course of time and today it is 480 days. The importance of parental leave for gender equality was pointed out already in government's proposition, where its introduction was motivated by the necessity to "avoid locking women and men in their traditional gender roles"<sup>14</sup> (Jansson, Pykkänen and Valck 2003: 11–12) and in order to give women possibility to work and men possibility to take responsibility for their children. In 1995 another important change in parental leave was introduced, i.e. *pappamånaden*<sup>15</sup> (daddy-month). This is a special part of parental leave that can only be taken out by this parent who otherwise does not take out the bigger part of leave. This leave cannot be given to the other parent, which means that it is not possible that only one parent takes out the whole parents' leave.

Summing up, in period from 1970s until now Sweden has taken several important measurements in order to achieve gender equality on the labour market and in families. The most important were laws on individual taxation and on gender equality as well as establishing special institutions to whom a citizen may turn if he/she feels discriminated. Apart from that, the state aimed at making it possible for parents to combine paid work with childcare by building up kindergartens and giving leaves that could be taken out by both parents.

## 5. WAS THE SWEDISH GENDER EQUALITY POLITICS SUCCESSFUL?

Gender equality politics seems to be a significant part of Swedish social politics and important measurements has been taken in order to achieve it. To what extent has this politics been successful? In order to try to answer this question I will analyze the statistics gathered by Statistiska Centralbyrån<sup>16</sup> (SCB) in the light of the Swedish gender equality politics.

One of the problems faced on the labour market in 1970s was a low number of women as manpower in relation to number of men. It is estimated that in 1970 only 60% of all women were employed, whereas at the same time the corresponding percentage share of men as manpower was 90% in 1970 (Statistics Sweden 2008: 8). However, in 2009 the percentage share of women on labour market increased to 81% (Statistics Sweden 2010: 46), whereas the percentage of men's participation in labour market fell to 88% at the same time (Statistics

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<sup>14</sup> Own translation.

<sup>15</sup> In fact this leave should be called *mamma-/ pappamånaden* (mummy/daddy month), because this 30 days' leave must be taken out by this parent who otherwise does not take the bigger part of the parents' leave. Johansson explains that today this special part of leave is usually called "daddy month" because it is mostly women who take out the bigger part of parents' leave (Johansson 2001: 65–66). In 2002 *pappamånaden* was prolonged to 60 days.

<sup>16</sup> Statistiska Centralbyrån (SCB) is an official Swedish institution which main task is to gather and publish official statistics of Sweden. More information about SCB can be found here [www.scb.se](http://www.scb.se).

Sweden 2010: 47). That shows that the general number of women participating in labour market has risen significantly since 1970s after the gender equality politics was launched. On the other hand it shows that number of men has fallen slightly. Concluding, a tendency to equalize the number of women and men on the labour market can be observed.

Another problem faced on labour market is the problem of wage differentials between women and men. Table 1 shows that in year 2009 an average women's wage calculated for all sectors was 85% of men's salary, if the factors like employee's education, age, occupation, job seniority and sector of employment are not taken into account. On the other hand, if these factors are considered, the average women's salary in 2009 was 93%.

The analysis of Table 1 shows that there still is a significant gap between men's and women's wages. However, it shows a general trend to minimize this gap with time. It is astounding especially in public sector, where women dominate as it will be shown in the next paragraph, that women's salary is still lower than men's and accounts for 85% of men's salary (96% if factors like employee's education, age, occupation job seniority and sector of employment are considered). In private sector dominated by men, women's salary is 87% (but only 92% if the factors like employee's education, age, occupation, job seniority and sector of employment are considered). Based on the analysis of this data, the following conclusions can be drawn: firstly, the gap between women's and men's wages has minimized significantly since 1950s; secondly, women's wages nowadays are generally still lower than men's in both sectors.

The problem of sex segregation of the labour market was quite visible in 1970s and is still present nowadays. In 1970 7% of women and 4% of men worked in occupations which had an equal participation of both sexes, whereas in year 2007 these numbers rose to 18% for women and 15% for men (Statistics Sweden 2008: 8). On one hand, a growth in number of women and men who worked in professions with equal participation of both sexes can be observed. On the other hand, this number is still too small in order to state that the labour market no longer is sex segregated. Moreover, it still can be observed nowadays that women and men work in different sectors. According to SCB in year 2007 50% of all employed women worked in the public sector and 50% in the private sector, whereas only 18% men worked in the public sector and 82% worked in the private sector (Statistics Sweden 2008: 8). Considering the fact that public sector tends to be less paid than the private sector<sup>17</sup>, it may be concluded that such a distribution of sexes between sectors may influence the wage differentials between the sexes.

Apart from different sectors, women and men tend to have different occupations. Figure 1 shows that among the 30 biggest professions, i.e. the professions with the biggest number of employees executing it, only 7 occupations has an equal distribution of sexes. These are salesman, auditor, cook, journalist, doctor, factory worker and boss of a small company within branches such as trade, hotel, restaurant and transport (Statistics Sweden, 2008: 65).

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<sup>17</sup> An average wage paid in public sector in 2009 was 26 200 SEK, whereas an average wage paid in private sector in 2009 was 28 700 SEK (Source: Statistics Sweden, SCB's internet database, see: [http://www.scb.se/Pages/TableAndChart\\_\\_\\_149077.aspx](http://www.scb.se/Pages/TableAndChart___149077.aspx)) [acquired in January 2011].

**Table 1**

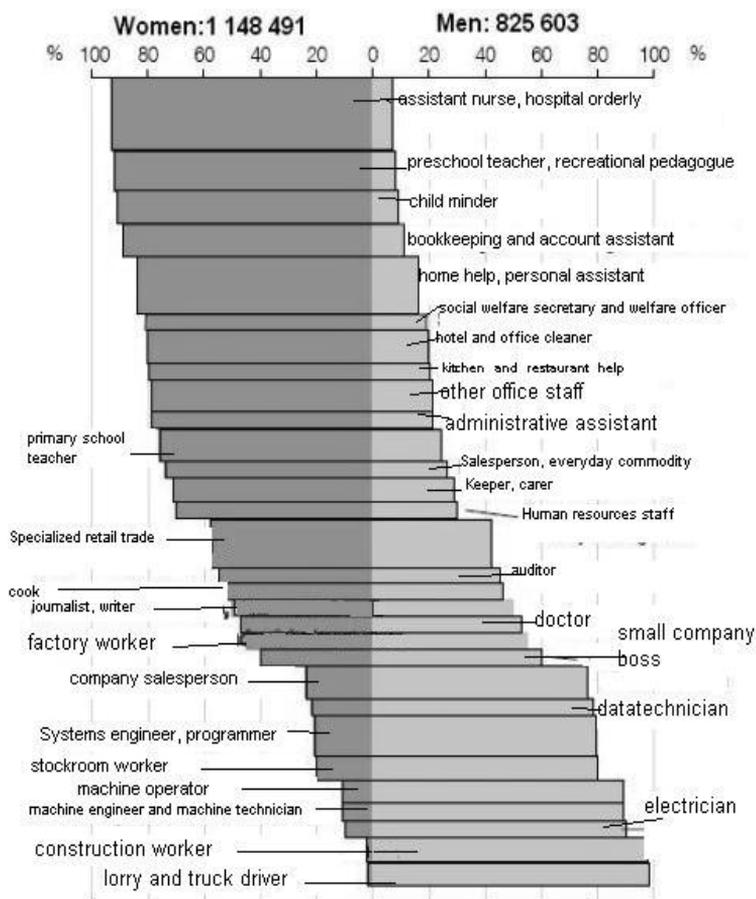
Women's wage in percentage of men's wage according to sector 1996–2009

year	Public sector		Private sector	
	Non standard weighed	Standard weighed	Non standard weighed	Standard weighed
1996	81	95	85	91
1997	81	95	84	91
1998	82	95	83	90
1999	82	95	84	90
2000	82	95	84	90
2001	82	96	84	90
2002	82	95	85	90
2003	82	96	85	90
2004	83	95	85	91
2005	83	96	85	91
2006	84	96	86	91
2007	83	96	86	91
2008	84	96	86	91
2009	85	96	87	92

Source (acquired and modified): Statistics Sweden, SCB's internet database, see [http://www.scb.se/Pages/TableAndChart\\_\\_\\_\\_149083.aspx](http://www.scb.se/Pages/TableAndChart____149083.aspx) [acquired in January 2011]

In 1970s women dominated in badly-paid professions and the analysis of Figure 1 shows that this situation has not changed dramatically since then. Figure 1 shows that among the biggest 30 professions in 2007 women dominated in professions like assistant nurse, preschool teacher and child minder, whereas men dominated in occupations such as lorry and truck driver, construction worker and electrician. Table 2 shows that three biggest women-dominated occupations tend to have lower average wages than three biggest men-dominated occupations.

Based on this analysis a conclusion may be drawn that even though more women and men work in equal occupations in comparison to 1970s, women still dominate in less-paid professions.



**Figure 1.** The 30 biggest occupations in 2007  
 Source (acquired and modified): Statistics Sweden 2008: 64

**Table 2**

An average wage after occupation and sex in year 2007

Three biggest women dominated occupations in 2007		Three biggest men dominated occupations in 2007	
Occupation	Average wage	Occupation	Average wage
Assistant nurse	20 400 SEK	Lorry and truck driver	22 000 SEK
Preschool teacher	21 900 SEK	Construction worker	25 200 SEK
Child minder	17 900 SEK	Electrician	24 700 SEK

Source: Statistics Sweden, SCB's internet database

Table 3 shows that vertical segregation can still be observed as women seem to be underrepresented as bosses in companies<sup>18</sup>. Unfortunately the statistics showing the distribution of sexes between bosses in 1970s are not available. However, the Table 3 shows an upward trend for women bosses in both sectors.

**Table 3**  
Bosses after sector

Year	Sector	Percentage of woman bosses [%]	Percentage of men bosses [%]
2000	Private	18	82
	Public	53	47
2004	Private	22	78
	Public	56	44
2006	Private	23	77
	Public	58	42
2008	Private	25	75
	Public	62	38

Source (acquired and modified): Statistics Sweden 2002: 94, 2006: 102, 2008: 106, 2010: 95.

The analysis of Table 3 shows that within 8 years the percentage of women bosses has risen from 18% in 2000 to 25% in 2008 in the private sector, whereas in the public sector it has risen from 53% in 2000 to 62% in 2008. However, it must be pointed out that in 2007 only 7 women were chief executive in all 294 companies quoted on the stock exchange (Statistics Sweden 2008: 107). Based on these data the following conclusions can be drawn: firstly, an upward tendency can be observed in the percentage of women bosses both in the private and public sector. Secondly, more women bosses are in the public sector, which seems to be connected to the fact that women generally dominate in the public sector.

One of the main aims of Swedish gender equality politics was to allow parents to combine paid work with childcare. In order to do that, it was decided to build up state-driven kindergartens. In 1972 only 12% of children below 6 years of age attended kindergartens (Statistics Sweden 2008: 43). However, this number constantly grew and in 2007 it reached 86% (Statistics Sweden 2008: 43). This data shows that a growth in the number of children

<sup>18</sup> In this article a definition of a boss is adopted as it is stated in Standard for a Swedish Professional Classification (SSYK): "A person with an administrative managing work and politic work within private and public sector. Work includes among others taking decisions, planning, supervising and coordinating" (own translation, Statistics Sweden 2008: 106).

attending kindergartens is observed. It is assumed that this is one of the factors that enabled both parents to work.

Parental leave and *pappamånad* were introduced in order to encourage parents to divide their responsibility for children and housework more equally. Table 4 shows that in 1970s it was almost exclusively mothers who took out parental leave in order to look after children.

**Table 4**

Division of parental leave between mother and father

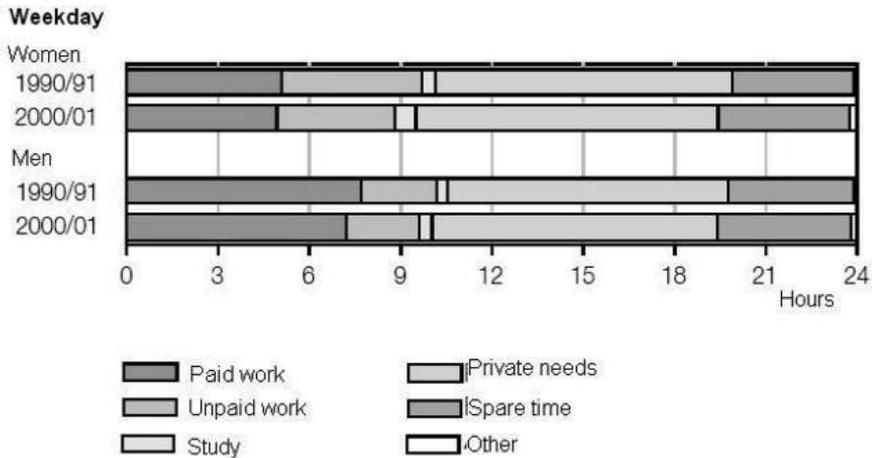
Year	Percentage of parents' leave taken by	
	Mother [%]	Father [%]
1974	100	0
1980	95	5
1985	94	6
1990	93	7
1995	90	10
1997	90	10
2000	88	12
2004	81	19

Source (acquired and modified): "Jämställdhetspolitiska utredningen" 2005: 259

Even though some growth in number of fathers who also take out their part of parental leave is observed, Table 4 proves that this process is quite slow as in 2004 it was only 19% of fathers in comparison to 81% of mothers who took out parental leave. Lisbeth Bekkengen names four most common reasons for which women tend to dominate in taking out parental leave, among which the most important seem to be economy reasons<sup>19</sup>. During the leave the parent receive 80% of his/her income and due to the fact that women's wages tend to be lower than men's, it is usually less economically burdening for the family budget if it is mother who stays away from work to look after a child. Therefore it may be assumed that wage differentials between the sexes tend to influence the decision on who stays at home with children instead of working and focusing on his/her career (Daumerie 2004: 52). Another aim of parental leave was to enhance equal sharing of unpaid housework between the partners. Although it seems to be quite difficult to measure the actual sharing of responsibility for housework, this can be done by analyzing the amount of time

<sup>19</sup> The other are traditional gender roles, attitudes at one's workplace and, surprisingly, women's unwillingness to share the leave with child's father (Jämställdhetspolitiska utredningen 2005: 261).

women and men spend at doing unpaid housework. Figure 2 shows that women work today for approximately the same amount of time paid and unpaid, whereas men work for money for twice as much time as they spend on unpaid work.



**Figure 2.** An average way of spending time, men and women  
 Source (acquired and modified): Statistics Sweden 2008: 40

It is estimated that women do 58% of housework in comparison to men who do only 42% (“Jämställdhetspolitiska utredningen” 2005: 294). Figure 2 shows that in comparison to year 1990 the amount of women’s paid work is comparable, whereas their unpaid work is nowadays lower. Men’s paid work nowadays is lower than in 1990, however their unpaid work seems to have remained constant. Factors mentioned above suggest that parental leave has to some extent contributed to increasing number of women who participating in the labour market and men who stay at home to look after their children. The growth of women who are active on the labour market is quite significant in comparison to 1970s. However, the growth of men staying at home to take care about their children appears to be surprisingly low. It should be also pointed out that since women tend to earn less than men, it may occur that it still will be the mother who takes out bigger part of parental leave for economic reasons. Moreover, women still seem to bear greater responsibility for housework than men. However, the awareness of the society concerning the necessity for equal sharing of housework and childcare between the parents seems to have grown and it can be considered as a significant change.

Summing up, on one hand the gender equality politics has been successful in the terms that it made women’s and men’s participation in the labour market more equal. On the other hand this participation is not on the same terms as women and men still work today in different sectors and different occupations for which they receive different wages. Although some change of attitudes concerning equal share of housework and childcare can be observed, the traditional gender roles seems to be still alive.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Gender equality seems to be an important problem in many modern societies and therefore country's gender equality politics appears to be a significant factor influencing comfort of living of the citizens. The aim of Swedish gender equality politics is to ensure that both women and men have equal rights, duties and possibilities in all important areas of life. To what extent has the Swedish gender equality politics been successful? Are men and women equal at the Swedish labour market and in families?

The assessment of the Swedish gender equality politics is ambivalent. On one hand Sweden is one of the most equal countries in the world. The situation of men and women has changed in comparison to 1960s as the equality between the sexes on the labour market and in families has risen. On the other hand, not all of the problems that women and men struggled with in 1960s have been completely solved. The remaining problem are: sex segregation, wage differentials and sharing of childcare and housework.

One of the greatest successes of Swedish gender equality politics is the growth of a number of women on the labour market. Women work today in a bigger extend than in 1960s, what makes them more independent and gives them a possibility to realize themselves within different areas. However, it is often the case that although both women and men have possibility to work, their participation in the labour market is not always according to the same standards. It appears that women and men still work in different sectors and they tend to have different occupations. Choosing different occupations should not be perceived as a problem as everyone is free to make his/her own choice due to their personal preferences. However, sex segregation of the labour market is connected to wage differentials between the sexes. Apart from that, sex segregation often means that an employee of the underrepresented sex has to make extra efforts in order to prove that he/she is equally good at his/her job. Such a situation concerns both a female boss in a big corporation and a male preschool teacher. Furthermore, the vertical sex segregation does not seem to be solved as it is mainly men who are bosses in big corporations. On one hand such a situation can be explained by attitudes and associating leading characteristics with manhood, but on the other hand this problem may be combined with the fact that it still is woman who bears bigger responsibility for housework and childcare, which makes it impossible for her to work overtime. Apart from that, it is also often woman who takes out bigger part of parental leave, which may also reduce her possibility of competing with men on labour market.

Wage differentials are still an actual problem on the labour market even though extensive changes within this area can be observed. On one hand wage differentials between the sexes has been reduced significantly in comparison to 1960s, but on the other hand they have not been removed. Women tend to have lower wages than men in most of occupations. This seems to be a serious problem as lower wages can cause not only frustration and dissatisfaction with one's job, but they also have more long-sighted consequences such as lower pensions, lower living standard and lower possibility to be independent economically.

Gender equality politics on the labour market seems to be closely related to gender equality politics in families. On one hand the Swedish gender equality politics seems to be quite successful on the family area as, in comparison to 1960s, a significant change in

gender roles can be observed. In comparison to 1960s more men tend to take out their part of parental leave and to look after children, while mother has a possibility to return to work. Moreover, this politics succeeded in changing attitudes and raising social awareness of the fact that both parents are responsible for childcare and maintaining family economically. On the other hand the number of men who take out their part of parental leave seems to grow at unsatisfactory rate and it is still mostly women who are responsible for childcare. A similar trend can be observed in case of housework. Summing up, changes in gender roles can be observed as today more men are engaged in housework than it was before, but it is still mostly women who are responsible for housework.

The new Swedish family politics resulted not only in changes in gender roles, but also in development of research done on men's role as a father and father's significance for children's upbringing as well as on men's attitude towards Swedish family politics (Plantin 2001, Klinth 2002). The attitude towards the new family politics based on gender equality politics is ambivalent. On one hand this attitude is positive<sup>20</sup> which is supported by the growth in the number of men taking out their part of parental leave since 1970s. On the other hand a critical attitude towards family politics can be observed. Plantin mentions the conservative attitude which questions the ideal of the new father (i.e. father who shares the childcare equally with mother) and points out that men have lost their position in families and that the ideal of "the real man" has become more feminine (Plantin 2001: 40).

Similarly as the first- and the second-wave feminism emphasized mother's rights, the Swedish gender equality politics in families has also resulted in emphasizing fathers' rights. This led, among others, to creation of groups who aim at pointing out fathers' rights and directing the public attention to fathers who are discriminated in case of child custody which often tends to be given to mother e. g. after divorce<sup>21</sup>. This movement seems to be significant to gender equality as it emphasizes that discrimination because of one's sex concerns not only women, but also men.

The Swedish gender equality politics on the labour market and in families seems to have succeeded to some extent even though it cannot be stated that the total gender equality has been reached. On one hand the number of women on labour market has risen, the wage differentials and sex segregation has reduced and sharing of childcare and housework seems to be more equal, but on the other hand, none of these problems have been solved. In its struggle for gender equality Sweden has taken mostly legal measurements. It may seem to be justified to impose legal regulations concerning labour market and wages, but one may wonder if problems such as sex segregation can be solved in that way. It is difficult to estimate if sex segregation is a result of legal limitations or if it is just a result of one's free choice. Similarly, one may wonder if it is justified that the state to some extent tries to interfere in one's private sphere such as family. Where does encouraging to share

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<sup>20</sup> In *Equal opportunities: Sweden paves the way* Karin Alfredsson points out that despite some employers' unwillingness towards male employees who take out their part of parental leave, being on parental leave is perceived as an asset in a man's career (Alfredsson 2005: 14).

<sup>21</sup> One of such groups is PRG (*PappaRättsGruppen*). The group aims at making the society aware of discrimination of men in legal cases concerning family affairs such as child custody and triggering public debate. More information about the group can be found on the group's website: [www.dads-r-us.se/](http://www.dads-r-us.se/).

housework and childcare in a certain way end and where does interfering begin? Is it really possible to make society more equal by imposing laws? Maybe the next step in achieving gender equality should be to try to change people's attitudes as it seems to be difficult to achieve gender equality if the society does not really believe in the fact that both men and women are equal.

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POZWOLIĆ KOBIECIOM WYJŚĆ Z DOMU, A MĘŻCZYZKOM DO NIEGO WRÓCIĆ.

SZWEDZKA POLITYKA RÓWNOUPRAWNIENIA NA RYNKU PRACY ORAZ W RODZINIE

Celem artykułu jest analiza wpływu szwedzkiej polityki równouprawnienia na rynek pracy oraz rodzinę od lat 70. XX wieku do XXI wieku. W artykule zaprezentowano problemy, z którymi kobiety i mężczyźni spotykali się na rynku pracy oraz w rodzinie (różnice płacowe, segregacja płciowa na rynku pracy oraz nierówny podział pracy opłacanej i nieopłacanej) i które przyczyniły się do wprowadzenia przez Szwecję polityki równouprawnienia. Obejmowała ona między innymi ustawę o rozdzielnym opodatkowaniu małżonków oraz ustawę o równouprawnieniu na rynku pracy. Celem zmian wprowadzonych w polityce rodzinnej było zachęcenie kobiet i mężczyzn do równego podziału opieki nad dzieckiem oraz obowiązków domowych. Analiza zebranego materiału pozwala stwierdzić, że polityka równouprawnienia w Szwecji przyczyniła się z jednej strony do zwiększenia aktywności zawodowej kobiet, większej integracji płciowej na rynku pracy, zminimalizowania różnic płacowych oraz do równego podziału opieki nad dzieckiem. Z drugiej jednak strony wydaje się, że nie można mówić o całkowitym sukcesie polityki równouprawnienia, ponieważ żaden z analizowanych problemów na rynku pracy oraz w rodzinie nie został całkowicie rozwiązany. Pomimo tego, że szwedzka polityka równouprawnienia kobiet i mężczyzn przyczyniła się w znacznym stopniu do zwiększenia świadomości obywateli oraz do zwiększenia stopnia równouprawnienia na rynku pracy i w rodzinie, to jednak nie pozwoliła ona na całkowite rozwiązanie analizowanych problemów.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka równouprawnienia, kobiety i mężczyźni, rynek pracy, rodzina, Szwecja