

**GENDER-MAINSTREAMING IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC  
POLICY IN SWEDEN: A MODEL FOR  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

*Thesis Submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
for the award of the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**MANASI SINHA**



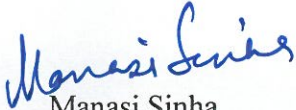
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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled “Gender-Mainstreaming in Social and Economic Policies in Sweden: A Model for the European Union” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.


  
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CERTIFICATE

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---

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## Abbreviations

BDPA	Beijing Declaration of Planning for Action
CoE	Council of Europe
CEEC	Central and East European Countries
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EEC	European Economic Community
EES	European Employment Strategy
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ESF	European Structural Funds
EUR	European currency “Euro“
EWL	European Union Lobby
GEI	Gender Equality Index
GGG	Global Gender Gap
HDI	Human Development Index
IBIES	Interdisciplinary Bridges for Indo-European Studies
IFAU	Swedish Institute for Labor Market and Educational Policy Evaluation
ICSSR	Indian Council for Social Science Research
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupation



JämKART	Gender Equality Survey Analysis and Conclusions
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University
LFS	Eurostat Labour Force survey
LO	Swedish Trade Union Confederation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MIEC	Ministry for Industry, Employment and Communications
NACE	National Association of Corrosion Engineers
NGM	Nordic Growth Market
NSGR	National Secretariat for Gender Research
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OGS	Occupational Gender Segregation
OMC	Open Method Coordination
OMX	Optionsmäklarna/Helsinki Stock Exchange
PLD	Parental leave Directive
PMD	Pregnancy and Maternity Directive
PWD	Part-time Workers Directive
RCC	Recommendation on Child care
SALAR	Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
SAP	Social Democratic Party
SEK	Sweden Krona Exchange
SGEP	Swedish Gender Equality Policy
SGS	Sectoral Gender Segregation
SOU	Southern Oregon University
SSIA	Swedish Social Insurance Agency
TEU	Twenty Foot Equivalent Units
UN	United Nations
WVS	World Value Survey

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## Chapter 1

# Conceptualising Gender Equality, Social-Economic Policy and Gender-Mainstreaming in Europe

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### 1.1 Overview: Background of the Research

Achieving ‘Gender Equality’ is one of the fundamental principles of any democratic society; however, gender inequality exists in most of societies as a living reality. The European Union (EU) in spite of being very vocal about gender issues too faces gender inequality within its domain. With the increasing importance of gender equality issues in world politics alongside various UN conventions; MDGs focusing on greater equality between men and women across all spheres in life; as well as commitments for a wider gender developmental approach towards inclusive growth and human rights etc.—is said to be setting ground for the EU’s direction towards greater equality and therefore the EU sought to incorporate gender perspective into most its policies so as to make a progressive and democratic world that stands for greater equality and social justice.

Gender Equality forms one of the European Union’s founding values, ‘dating back to the beginning of the European Community (the EEC) in 1957 when the principle of equal pay for equal work became provision of the Treaty of Rome (Article 119)’<sup>1</sup> Since then, the EU has been vociferously promoting gender equality as essential for sustaining its economic growth and normative values:

“...ensuring equality between women and men is not only a necessity from a rights perspective, but it also makes sense from an economic perspective...women have massively entered the labour market and contributed to the EU’s economic growth and competitiveness.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers (2015). Also available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/eurobarometer\\_report\\_2015\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/eurobarometer_report_2015_en.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

The Commission's adoption of the 'Roadmap'<sup>3</sup> for equality between women and men<sup>4</sup> on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2006 delineates on the priorities and framework of action for promoting equality in the period to 2010, therefore continuing its commitment towards promoting gender equality and ensuring that all its policies contribute to accomplish that objective (COM, 2007 49 final p.3).

The Commission's 2010-2015 strategy for equality between women and men also represents EU's commitment towards five key areas for achieving gender equality:

“(i) equal economic independence for women and men; (ii) equal pay for work of equal value; (iii) equality in decision making; (iv) dignity integrity and ending gender-based violence; and (v) promoting gender equality beyond the EU. All these five areas still remain the key objective areas for the EU. In its 'strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019', the Commission puts forth these priority areas and make it a reference framework for increased efforts at all levels, be they European , national, regional or local and it continues to corroborate the 2011-2020 European Pact of gender equality.”<sup>5</sup>

However, in spite of all the EU proclamations and defined objectives, gender inequalities in Europe still exist. In Europe 'women still paid on average around 16% less than men per hour of work across the entire economy. Women also continuing to be underrepresented in leadership positions, including decision-making functions in politics and in corporate boardrooms – with women holding only 27% of seats in national parliaments and governments; 18% of board seats; and 3% of CEO positions. In addition to this, violence against women remains an issue, with an estimated 20-25% of women in Europe having been victims of physical violence at least once in their lives. Above all, there is persistence of traditional gender roles

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<sup>3</sup> 'The Roadmap is the successor to the Community Action Programmes on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. It is a tool that serves to monitor gender mainstreaming in the policy making process at the DGs, functioning as a framework for the mainstreaming of gender in policy proposals and projects. For each area, the Roadmap identifies both priority objectives and actions to be followed. Every year the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (DG Employment hereafter) releases a Work Programme where a follow-up to the Roadmap is presented, specifying what has been done and what remains to be done for each priority areas'. See Calvo 2013:34

<sup>4</sup> COM (2006) 92 final.

<sup>5</sup> It is the bridging link between the Commission's Strategy for Equality between women and men 2010-2015 and 'Europe 2020': the European Union's Strategy for jobs and smart sustainable and inclusive growth and the Council of the European Union reaffirm its commitment through this. See Council of the European Union (2011). Also available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender\\_equality/document/files/strategic\\_engagement\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender_equality/document/files/strategic_engagement_en.pdf).

meaning that women still carry a disproportionate share of the burden of housework and of caring for children, the elderly and other dependants.’<sup>6</sup>

Over the decades, the EU has adopted various strategies like (i) Equal treatment legislation<sup>7</sup>; (ii) Gender mainstreaming<sup>8</sup>; (iii) Positive actions for women- in order to address the issue gender inequality within its social, economic and political spheres. However, most of the strategies seemed to have been overlapped or coexisted with other priority areas of the EU. Bringing more women into various sectors of its economy although had balanced the gender gap between men and women in labour market to an extent, the corresponding inequality between men and women with respect to their traditional gender role stereotypes within family was not much addressed. The new market economy invariably failed to anticipate the widespread inequalities that continued because of the disproportionate relationship between the growing number of women in the labour market on one side, and persistence of gendered division of household work within family on the other that reproduces inequality in gender relations leading to inequality at wider level.

The growing participation of women in the labour market could not mitigate the persistence of gender stereotypes and related gender roles for women and men. Women continue to carry out disproportionate share of household responsibilities and of caring work for children, the elderly and other dependents which very often result into conflicting work with family responsibility. In comparison to women’s increasing involvement within family and the labour market, there has not been much substantial changes taken place with respect to men's traditional roles and responsibilities. Changing attitudes of men and boys towards gender equality and involving them more into caring and household activities are still missing in the EU policy discourse. The vital question of gender equality was reduced down to addressing lack of women participation in the labour market-which usually is associated with cause of gender inequality-and is therefore formulated policies accordingly to reduce gender gaps

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<sup>6</sup> *Supra note 1*

<sup>7</sup> The EU mandates for equal opportunity in the areas of employment and training; social security and pensions; access to goods and services; and professional, private and family life.

<sup>8</sup> The inclusion of gender perspective in all of its policies.

without addressing the corresponding gender role relations between men and women within family which reproduces gender inequality at wider level. Achieving substantial outcome therefore has not been much possible at the EU level. Sweden on the contrary, has been remarkable with respect to bridging existing gender inequality in its society by transforming gender role relations at all levels. It makes the myth of gender equality possible in real life.

This research deals with the social and economic policies<sup>9</sup> in Sweden and gender equality issues, primarily focusing on how the social and economic policies have been able to bring greater gender equality within family and workplace in Sweden. This brings into attention various interconnected aspects like welfare state, gender care regimes etc. along with ongoing debates on gender (in)equality in Europe for situating the context of the research. The conjoint involvement of discourse analysis and feminist discourse further helped in shaping the analysis of the research in a wider way. The prime objective of this research is to investigate, how the Swedish gender equality perspective has been intertwined with its social and economic policies (macro level policies) leading further to bring transformation in the gender relations within family (micro level). The concept of gender-mainstreaming as a determining factor has been used to show how the particular social and economic policies are fed with this gender equality policy strategy. The research aims to study specific social and economic policies namely parental leave, public childcare, individual taxation, and some labour market policies (briefly) to show how these policies reflect a strong gender equality perspective within their ambit and has impacted the gender relations at large. In the exploration of the findings the research focuses on married and working parents only and single mother or single parent fall beyond the scope of this research.

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<sup>9</sup> The term social and economic policies are interchangeably used with family policy and employment policy.



### ***1.1.1 Case Selection:***

The underlying reason for justifying Sweden--as the country of success along with an efficacious gender mainstreaming strategy reflected across policy areas-- has been a relative development that Sweden has shown on almost all the development indices in comparison to other European countries over the decades. Based on this justification, three hypotheses are put forth for this study. Before citing those hypotheses, what is significant is to discuss the positional situation of Sweden within the EU parameters and various development indices; the issues and perspective of gender equality policy in the European Union in general and Sweden in particular; the discourse on carework and gender equality; the discourse on Swedish welfare state and its relation to gender mainstreaming and corresponding elements etc. All these issues are significant linkages to analyse this research study and are discussed in the subsequent segments of this chapter.

The point of departure for this research is gender mainstreaming strategy which was introduced as a concept and stipulated objective in the 'Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action'(1995).<sup>10</sup> This heralded a new phase in the development discourse and is seen as the 'most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights' (UN Women 2014)<sup>11</sup>. 'What makes this strategy unique is its ingrained values that it provides with regards to achieving gender equality. Being part of the platform, the EU was very much enthusiastic about its acceptance at the EU level and strongly lobbied for the Declaration' (Kantola: 2010). Along with EU's previous gender equality provisions in the Treaties,<sup>12</sup> gender mainstreaming was now taking place in the EU policy discourse. However, what argument runs through this study is that a well defined approach to gender mainstreaming has been missing in the EU policy discourse since beginning.<sup>13</sup> While, the commitment for 'gender equality' was put forth as the 'primary goal' in most of the treaties and charter of fundamental rights,

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<sup>10</sup> Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), China.

<sup>11</sup> Available at <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about>

<sup>12</sup> Treaty of Rome 1957 substantiates equal opportunity for men and women and the Treaty of Amsterdam 1997 brought forth major development in the EU gender equality policy.

<sup>13</sup> For the first time the Council of Europe sought to define the strategy of gender mainstreaming in 2004 making it relevant for overall EU's policy making process. The definition goes like: '(re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policymaking'(Council of Europe, 2004).

nonetheless, the EU has not been able to provide a strong foundation on which a genuine gender equal society can be laid down. On the other hand, Sweden sets out to bring relative success in bringing greater gender equality as compare to many of its European counterparts.

Like other EU Members, Sweden had ratified goals and objectives of Beijing declaration and therefore sought to incorporate and implement gender mainstreaming into its national policies.<sup>14</sup> The gender-mainstreaming has been the main strategy to achieve the gender equality policy objectives in Sweden and as such it has been the strategy of choice for Swedish government and Riksdag since 1994. It was first set out in the Govt. Bill as *Shared power, shared responsibility* (Government Bill 1993/94, no. 147).<sup>15</sup> The Country has adopted it to the extent that the policy makers and the ministers<sup>16</sup> equivocally strive to implement it across social and economic policies.

For decades, Sweden is heading others with respect achieving gender equality. Daly (2005) asserted that a systematic implementation of gender mainstreaming with the help of its effective analysis of tools in the design and implementation across policy areas is the signature of Sweden's contemporary gender policy [...] all public, private and voluntary organisations such as ministries, public authorities, private firms and voluntary associations are actively practicing the concept (2005: 436). Guenther further spelled out that Sweden is one of those very few countries in Europe that has implemented gender mainstreaming at local level (Guenther 2008: 589).

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<sup>14</sup> As a matter of fact 'Sweden had adopted gender mainstreaming as its main gender equality method since 1994, even before the EU promoted the concept. 'According to Rubery's (2002) cross-national study on gender mainstreaming, Sweden marks as most innovative and active in implementing the concept in all of the explored fields-active labour market policies, tax and benefit policies, lifelong learning, entrepreneurship, working time flexibility and work reorganization'(Cited in Neuman, M. 2009).

<sup>15</sup> The architect of the Bill was the then Minister for Social Affairs and Chairman of the Liberal Party, Bengt Westerberg, Swede. The aim of the Bill was to influence the distribution of power among men and women to ensure that 'women and men...have the same rights, obligations and possibilities in all important areas of life' (Bill 1993/94, no.147, p.4). The Bill was a continuation of previous commitment proposed in the action plan 1988. For more details see (Lundqvist: 2011).

<sup>16</sup> In Sweden, each minister with the respective Ministry is responsible for incorporating gender perspective into their policies and work towards fulfillment of gender equality goals in his or her specific area. The Minister of Gender Equality coordinates this government policy with other departments and ensures whether a gender equality perspective is being incorporated at all levels and in all stages in the decision making process.

The political commitment and progressive aspect of Sweden with respect to gender equality<sup>17</sup> has been further expressed in the National Gender Equality Policy Objectives (Govt. Bill 2005/ 06:155).<sup>18</sup> All through 1960s and 1970s Sweden was seen as an international leader in what is now referred to as the ‘sexual revolution’, with gender equality being the particular marker of the country’s world image.

The research is based on the premise that although the strategy of gender mainstreaming has been implemented both at the EU (supranational) level and in Sweden (national level) with the same set of objectives and goals, it marks different outcome respectively for both the entities. In case of the earlier, gender mainstreaming is co-opted with other priorities and goals of the EU to boost up the economic aspect of the EU, in case of latter, gender mainstreaming is associated with value oriented goals seeking to serve the values of gender equality, social justice and human rights. In case of latter, gender mainstreaming is directed to address the root cause of gender inequality and is therefore used to deconstruct embedded gender system that validates gender role relations in society by altering and sharing traditional gender roles between men and women by policy instruments.

Choosing Swedish model of gender mainstreaming over other European countries can be seen as an interesting aspect for this research because of the fact that as Sweden is often considered as a ‘path breaking’ (Meuser & Neusüß 2004: 17)<sup>19</sup> example in implementing gender mainstreaming, this research may help in exploring what Sweden as a country is doing so uniquely as compare to its European counterparts so as to be able to offer it as a model for the European Union. Also in will help to know

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<sup>17</sup> The progressive approach of Sweden towards gender issues can be traced out in various major breakthroughs: ‘equal inheritance rights for women and men (1845); women gaining national suffrage and the right to hold office at the national level(1921); maternity allowance (1938); elected first woman cabinet minister(1947); three months paid maternity leave for working women on birth of a child (1955); first country to pass a law against rape in marriage (1965); individual taxation (1971); paid parental leave (1974); legalized abortion law-a woman has the right to abort until the 12th weeks (1975); equality opportunities ombudsman (1980); segregated statistics reflecting Sweden’s official statistics on gender (1994); shared parental leave by mother and father (“mummy/daddy month”)(1995); Act on violence against women (1998); law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services(1999); increased parental leave up to 480 days, with each parent entitled to two months of non-transferable benefits(2002); introducing action plan for gender-mainstreaming in government offices(2004); discrimination Act replacing previous seven anti-discrimination laws namely: the equal opportunities Act(2009). See Statistics Sweden 2014.

<sup>18</sup> For more details see Government of Sweden, (2007).

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Inga, Voßeler (2015): 1-41.

how Sweden has adopted various steps and initiatives that resonate with gender mainstreaming.

Hence, the research unveils the relative gender equality policy framework in Sweden and in the EU to study what are the existing elements or factors/issues of gender equality policy in respective level which led to develop and implement the strategy of gender mainstreaming. The study also explores, in what way the Swedish welfare state policies sought to reflect gender mainstreaming into its core of policy areas. The understanding of gender mainstreaming at the level of the EU and Sweden is much relevant for exploring why the strategy of gender mainstreaming with its similar objectives and goals have marked varied outcome at both level. The research further explores to what extent Swedish experience can be emulated at the EU level and what are the scopes and challenges. To this end, some of the social and economic policies are taken up for analysis of this research. Some of these policies and initiatives are namely: (i) Parental leave; (ii) Individual Taxation; (iii) Public Childcare along with some major initiatives in the labour market etc. that reflect the strong commitment towards gender equality in Sweden.

While delving deep down, the research finds the aspect of ‘welfare state’ much relevant for contextualising gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming strategy in Sweden. The remarkable text, ‘*Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*<sup>20</sup>’, by Esping Andersen (1990) became the cornerstone for relating the progressive gender equality policy of Sweden to its welfare commitments. Unlike most of other European welfare states which either reinforces the prevalent gender order by partially benefiting its male citizens or making both men and women dependent to the forces of the state and market economy,<sup>21</sup> Sweden formulated a linkage between its welfare and institutional set up to its citizens, focusing more on de-linking market forces to influence family and the prevalent gender hierarchy, thus de-commodifying the family and prevalent gender order. The concept of ‘defamilisation’<sup>22</sup> is very important in this context. It is often defined as “the degree to which individuals can uphold a socially acceptable

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<sup>20</sup> In “The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism”, he distinguishes three types of welfare states which are, for him, “key institutions in structuring of class and the social order” (Esping- Andersen 1990: 55).

<sup>21</sup> Comparative welfare state research scholars see the welfare state as an “essential pillar in the prevalent gender order (Theobald, 1999: 11)”-- cited in *Supra note* 19 at 6.

<sup>22</sup> Many sociologists along with Esping-Andersen (1999) like Taylor-Gooby (1996), Bambra (2004), Korpi (2000) have defined and used this concept of defamilisation in their analysis of welfare state and gender system.

standard of living, independent of family relationships, either through paid work or through social security provisions” (Lister 1997:173). It acknowledges the fact that “the functional equivalent of market dependency for many women is family dependency” (Esping Andersen 1999:45). As such ‘defamilisation’ can be used as a parameter to testify of the extent to which a welfare state regime(s) provide favourable ground for female autonomy and economic independence from the family. And Sweden typifies such welfare commitments by encouraging and promoting dual-earner model through its welfare state policy mechanisms (it recognises equal sharing of care work and guarantees freedom of choice for men and women with respect to their rights and responsibilities).

The research is based on the premise that Sweden being a “‘egalitarian’ (Forster, 2014) and ‘social democratic’ (Jochem: 2012)”<sup>23</sup> welfare state together with its inherent socio-cultural values and norms set the favourable environment for forming such a progressive gender equality policy and the corresponding implementation of gender mainstreaming strategy in to all its policy areas. What marks a difference in approach between Swedish gender equality policy and the gender equality policy at the EU level is the nature and orientation of policies. In case of the former, the policies focused more on equal and varied aspects of both the gender, thus celebrating and accommodating the diversity principle, and in case of latter, i.e. the EU, the focus of gender equality policies is more oriented towards reinforcing the differences between both men and women, therefore finding the solution in integrating women into the normative male system.

**1.1.2 Relevance of the Study:** This research acquires a strong relevance for analysing the study on gender mainstreaming in the EU and Sweden because of various reasons: Over the years, the concept of gender mainstreaming has emerged as a matter of political debate and also became a part of significant discussion in wider gender research studies and to analyse more of EU gender policies.

A huge amount of scholarly contribution towards theoretical and scientific understanding for innovating new ideas and strategies; for testifying various empirical

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<sup>23</sup> *Supra note.* 19 at 5,16.

researches on gender equality measures are in place and gender mainstreaming in particular is emerged as one such resounding innovation. For example, in the discussion about gender politics as well as in gender-political practice, gender mainstreaming is very present (Meuser & Neusüß 2004: 9).<sup>24</sup> The research on Gender Mainstreaming has a high status in current gender studies (ibid.).

The study holds that most of gender equality policies at the EU level seem not to anticipate how the participation of women in the labour market resulted into increasing women's share in both paid and unpaid work (women still carry the lion's share in household responsibility and the care work. However, there was hardly any consistent and corresponding change took place in the lives of men in terms of their participation in the unpaid work. The gap in gender relations with respect to sharing unpaid work did not receive much attention in most of policy discourse in the EU level. The policies seem to be formulated around giving economic opportunity for women without really mitigating their domestic roles. Policies like 'reconciliation policies'<sup>25</sup> are meant to support balancing work-life situation for women only and are not transformative in nature as it does not seek to transform gender relations within family, therefore (re)produces gender<sup>26</sup> inequality in the family and in the labour market. The policies tend to be materialistic in nature providing supplementary benefits for women. Strategies like 'equal opportunity in the labour market', or 'positive action' had been implemented at the EU level over the years, and remains subservient to the economic objectives of the EU. However, in case of Sweden, the commitments towards gender equality have been effectively implemented through gender equality policies and even in the wake of globalisation and economic crisis, Sweden sets a good example for the rest of the EU welfare states with respect of reinstating welfare commitments towards gender equality.

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<sup>24</sup> *Supra note.* 19 at 6

<sup>25</sup> The EU promotes reconciliation policies in order to balance between work and domestic life and responsibilities.

<sup>26</sup> By providing women with flexible work preferences, part-time job, occupational segregation, glass ceiling etc. many research shows that women are highly concentrated into the service sector professions including caring, health and education which leads to feminisation of these jobs. The availability of women in traditionally feminine job like nurse, paramedical, or home helps along with their flexible work life reinforces their traditional role of being a mother and a carer.

Moreover, as there are major rapid and dramatic changes happening at the social, economic and political level within the extended European Union, and gender roles and being constantly challenged at the social and economic level, new demands for altering decade long gender system is on rise. Consistent efforts to bridge gender inequality by pulling more women into the labour market did not necessarily reduce the gender gap as the corresponding world of unpaid work which associates women with their traditional role of household responsibility and care work remain unnoticed and unaddressed. At the same time the traditional 'male-breadwinner' model is constantly being challenged in the wake of growing economic concern and demand for a dual worker model because of women's equal involvement in the economy. Furthermore, there is a declining tendency in fertility rate along with increasing divorce rates make the situation worse in Europe. In such a situation, gender mainstreaming offers way out to resolve the crisis.

Therefore, an extensive research on gender mainstreaming will not only explore the existing loopholes and drawbacks at the EU level but will also bring into notice different practices of gender mainstreaming at both the EU and in Sweden. The relative framework of gender equality policy in Sweden and in the EU might also help in exploring new perspectives, approaches, and possible challenges that occur at the national and supranational level and can help in establishing causal mechanisms that led to create those variations. It will also help in analysing multidimensional aspects of gender mainstreaming strategy thus improving the chances of its application in different welfare gender regimes.

Besides this, as the EU is on the way to ever expansionary phase, the issue of gender mainstreaming and its implementation bears more importance as with the enlargement of the EU, more actors and Member states would involve in the policy making process- thus leading to provide- 'multiple meanings and understanding of women, men, gender and gender equality' (Kantola, 2010: 214). Hence, this research can be useful in identifying those multitude meanings and understandings of 'gender equality' and associated terms and concepts, thus contributing to enrich the scope of gender equality framework.

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework:**

The theoretical framework of this research examines the underlying theory in two ways. First, it looks into the feminist discourse on gender equality and its associated concepts and issues and connects them to the wider context of Europe and Sweden. This forms the basic understanding of how gender equality is being perceived in general in wider Europe; what are the debates and concerns around gender equality and how they are all connected to welfare state policies. Second, the discussion is taken at the policy level to understand how representation of 'gender equality' as a problem is defined in the policy discourse at both the EU and in Sweden and subsequently leads to reflect in various policy areas. The problem representation is significant in terms of policy discourse and it defines the direction and effectiveness of various policies.

### ***1.2.1 Problematizing 'Gender Equality' in Policy Discourse***

The concept of gender is essential for analysing or exploring the relations between the welfare state and women; to unveil those hidden threads of socio-economic policies of welfare state and their relations with family, population question and even how a particular state perceive women. Gender implies power and the relation between the sexes and helps us to reformulate the so called problem of women and society.

The research is based on the presumption that representation of the concept of 'gender inequality' as a problem in the policy discourse leads to different proposed solutions. To this end, some policy documents like policy reports, official statements, policy texts in the EU and in Sweden are taken up to find out underpinning ideas and representations that constitute different discourses of gender equality, which further results into developing distinct gender equality policy and the corresponding effects at both level. Developing such discourse also paves the way for formulating social and economic policies.

While going through the existing literature on gender equality policy as well as social and economic policies in the EU and in Sweden, along with their relation with gender mainstreaming strategy, this study noted diverse interpretations regarding concepts on gender equality and its corresponding usage in policy documents following which



'gender' is being problematised, incorporated and is being used in the policy texts to deliver its ends. The classic book *'What's the Problem Represented to be'* by Carol Lee Bachhi (1999) has been a great source for exploring the issue of 'problematizing gender' in policy discourse. The most significant idea that has been useful for this research is that "every policy proposal contains within it an explicit or implicit diagnosis of the 'problem'; that is, every policy proposal contains a "problem representation". Therefore, policies constitute "competing interpretations or representations of political issues" (ibid.: 2). Policies discursively construct a 'problem' and, at the same time, propose a solution to this problem. The formulation of a solution is influenced by the very definition of the problem, so that the definition of a problem influences the sorts of solutions that are to be proposed, and the solution, in turn, constructs the 'problem' in a specific way. Hence, the object of study is not 'problems' but *problematizations* (ibid.). This approach provides "a tool for uncovering the frames that construct policy problems" (ibid.: 207). It also focuses on the effects of problem representations (ibid.: 2, 6).<sup>27</sup>

While working on Bachhi's idea of policy discourse, Calvo (2013) studies the 'ways in which gender equality is being constructed in the policy context of the European Union'(2013). Her research analyses how are the terms 'gender' and 'gender (in) equality' being defined in relation to the strategy of gender mainstreaming at the EU level in general and within policy areas of development cooperation and migration in particular. The idea of her research is to examine how the 'problem' of gender (in)equality is being presented/defined in different texts (including policy documents and interviews) (2013, p. 19,20). More specifically, she wanted to identify what is the 'problem', what is/are the proposed solutions, and also try to uncover the implications/effects of such definitions in terms of what kinds of subjects are constructed and what limits are imposed on what can be thought and said. She sought to study the hidden meanings in policy documents, to uncover the presuppositions and

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<sup>27</sup> Bachhi distinguishes three categories of effects: 'the ways in which subjects and subjectivities are constructed in discourse; the effects which follow from the limits imposed on what can be said; and the 'lived effects' of discourse' (ibid.: 200). For Bachhi, the idea of 'lived effects' of policy discourses or problem representations refers to the real impacts of problem representations on people's lives. Bachhi points out that 'the notion of lived effects thereby highlights the way in which policies create representations of problems that have effects in the real by materially affecting our lives' (Bachhi 2009:18)

assumptions that underlie and constitute different discourses of gender equality and to identify the implications of it.

Poulsen (2006) also had applied Bachhi's ideas to study the 'ways in which gender equality is being constructed-ascribed meaning-in the context of the ILO (International Labour Organisation) (ILO)'. The object of the study in Poulsen's research is the ILO's gender-mainstreaming approach (ibid.: 24). The assumption is that 'gender' and 'equality' are ascribed with different meanings in different contexts (ibid.: 25). She explores how gender is defined in relations to the strategy of gender-mainstreaming and how this definition is used in International Development Cooperation (ibid.:4). Poulsen argues that "all too often the meanings of 'gender' and 'equality' are often taken for granted and not explicitly defined" (ibid.: 25). She sought to describe the discourses of the ILO that demarcate what can be said, thought and done in relation to gender equality and who-what subject positions-legitimately can say, think and do this. That is what are the concepts, objects and subjects that are being produced by these discourses (ibid.: 92).

Poulsen, Bachhi and Calvo's studies have set the ground for the point of departure for this research. Their studies help this research to analysis the social and economic policies in Sweden and the way these policies are informed with a strong gender equality perspective. This further has helped in understanding how the term 'gender equality' is being perceived by the policy makers in Sweden. More so, it also helps to explore how this understanding about 'gender equality' in gender equality policy discourse feed the concept of gender-mainstreaming strategy in Sweden and paves the way for its incorporation into social and economic policies in a distinct way.

There is certainly an agreement on the fact that, gender mainstreaming at the EU level has not fulfilled its promise of being a transformative strategy while Sweden stood up to its values. In this context, the argument that runs through the research is that social and economic policies in Sweden had been remarkably successful in bringing greater gender equality because of the way a strong gender perspective is constructed in the policy discourse which in a way set the ground for achieving promise of gender mainstreaming objectives. However, at the EU level, incorporating gender equality has been more of a need than an intention. In Europe, the imminent need to bring

equality between men and women receives most of its validity from its recent emerging trends oozing out from a wide variety of socio-economic, political, and cultural changes that have taken place across the European countries over the decades and have been constantly challenging the EU's growth as a Normative Actor.

Of all these trends, the economic crisis as well as demographic deficit across Europe, including declining fertility rate, population ageing, falling marriage rates, increasing the number of single parents etc. have significantly shaped the policy concern which is why not only pulling women into the labour market has been important but also addressing the issues related to women's additional burden of caring and household responsibilities has been of paramount importance for the European Union as well as for the individual countries. However, public policies like social policies or employment policies were designed only to balance the work-family conflicts for women and the larger question of transforming gender role relations remain unaddressed. Thus the commitments for achieving greater gender equality evade the policy goals of the EU.

### ***1.2.2 Approaching Gender Equality: The Feminist Discourse***

Theoretical look out for the interpretation of gender as a social structure usually takes us to the previous feminist thinkers who pioneered in theorising gender and its relevant aspects. Sociologists and feminist thinkers may disagree on many dimensions of contemporary gender discourse, but agreeing on the existing gender inequality across domains may not be a matter of contention between the two. The following section presents a discussion on the previous perspectives on gender inequality followed by the contemporary gender discourse so as to establish a linkage between the past and the present.

The research locates the interpretation of gender as a social construct, the way it is being produced at various levels and thus analyses the ways to deconstruct it. Understanding the concept of gender as a social construct and the varied actors involved in producing the gendered structure-come in way to the process of such construction-is important as it provides the base for building a comprehensive

knowledge about how such socially constructed gender roles at the micro level (family) are deconstructed through macro level policies (in this context social and economic policies) in Sweden.

For decades, feminist thinkers have been vocal against the notion of biological determinism<sup>28</sup> and refuted the idea of biology as determined factor gender roles for men and women in society. Countering the approach of biological determinism, feminists have argued that behavioural and psychological differences between men and women have a social, rather than biological causes. They sought to define *Gender as a social construct* and the most influential text in this direction which projected this doctrine on social construction, is the canonical text of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* in which she stated: "*On ne nait pas femme: on le devient; One is not born, but rather becomes a woman*" (de Beauvoir 1949, II, 1; 1952, 267).<sup>29</sup> The text implicitly suggested that, commonly observed gender roles and behavioural traits associated with men and women are not genetic but are culturally learned and acquired. However, although the previous approach of biological determinism is nowadays uncommon, the idea that 'behavioural and psychological differences between women and men have biological causes has not disappeared'<sup>30</sup>.

Until 1960s, 'gender' was used solely to refer to the masculine and feminine words, like *le* and *la* in French (Nicholson 1994, p.80). The arguments of feminists groups against biological determinism suggested that gender differences are resulted from cultural practices and social expectations and is the product of 'social conditioning' (typically set early in life) and therefore is alterable by political and social reform. The existing inequality between both the gender is therefore sought to be altered through dismantling the binary world of public/private sphere which validates for a gender division of labor and assigned traditional gender roles for men and women -a

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<sup>28</sup> 'A typical example of biological determinist view expressed by Geddes and Thompson who, in 1889, argued that social, psychological and behavioural traits were caused by metabolic state. For them women supposedly conserve energy (being 'anabolic') which makes them passive, conservative, sluggish, stable and uninterested in politics. Men expand their surplus energy (being 'katabolic') which makes them eager, energetic, passionate, variable and, thereby, interested in political and social matters. These biological 'facts' about metabolic states were used not only to explain behavioural differences between women and men but also justified prevalent social and political arrangements.' For more details see <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-gender/>.

<sup>29</sup> See de Beauvoir, S. (2012).

<sup>30</sup> *Supra note 28*

division that characterises the public sphere as a male domain and private sphere as a female domain respectively.

However, in the wake of modernity and new changes across world, perception towards gender relations is changing and the gender roles are also transcending in nature. The modernisation theory<sup>31</sup> holds that development brings changes in the cultural attitude towards gender equality as in societies that experience various forms of modernisation and are linked with economic development may bring systematic and transformative changes in traditional gender roles. For instance, during 1960s economic growth was considered as the only determinant factor for achieving human development as well as prosperity in the status of women. Both men and women were therefore drawn into the labour market but did not challenge the traditional gender roles that split their boundaries of work. Over the decades, as European countries transitioned into post-modern societies, the expectations towards gender roles and behaviours also became transitory. New emerging framework demanded to alter and deconstruct gender system and its hierarchical power relations between men and women and therefore questioned traditional gender roles within the family. The new framework seeks to alter the political aspects of masculinity and view 'men' as the agent of change in the gender equality framework.

In the context of Europe, the issue of gender equality needs to be understood within the framework of two major transformations that took place in Western societies: the development of the welfare state and the emergence of Gender Regimes (discussed below). There is a substantial role on part of Welfare State in (re)defining gender roles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In case of Europe, as there has been a constant demand for restructuring the European welfare system since the beginning of 20th century because of new economic challenges in one hand, there are simultaneous need for the European welfare states to retain its embedded values for democracy, equality and social justice on the other and thus the imminent need arises to initiate public policies to accommodate all the interests.

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<sup>31</sup> 'Modernization theories originated in the works of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. These ideas were revived and popularized during the late 1950s and early 1960s by Seymour Martin Lipset, Daniel Lerner, Walt Rostow and Karl Deutsch who suggest that economic, cultural and political changes go together in coherent ways, so that industrialisation brings broadly similar trajectories even if situation-specific factors make it impossible to predict exactly what will happen in a given society' (Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, 2003).

### ***1.2.3 Understanding ‘Gender Equality’ for the Research Study***

The academic discussion around the conceptualisation and theorisation of gender equality and its related aspects is too wide to capture on a single research agenda. Hence, this research study refers only those theories and concepts which views gender equality with respect to redistribution of resources and responsibilities between men and women. For building a comprehensive understanding, this research follows the discussion of R.W.Connel (1985, 1987) and Barbara J. Risman (2004, 2009) which form the basis in conceptualising ‘gender equality’ for this research.

Connell’s analysis on ‘sex role theory’ and its implication on understanding the formulation of social policy is quite relevant for this research. Connell views gender as a process and is ‘practice based (Connell 1987: 61),<sup>32</sup> and hence, needs to be framed sociologically. She considers that gender relations are a social question (ibid.). Connell also elucidates that gender is a historical process through which reproductive biology is socially dealt with (Ibid.: 79). It is the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes (Connell, 2009: 11). However, “the reproductive dichotomy male/female does not by any means determine gender but the connection between nature and the social is a ‘connection through practice’” (Connell 1987: 78). Practice deals with the natural qualities of its objects, including the biological characteristics of bodies. The body is therefore dealt with, modified, through practice (ibid.: 83). Connell’s ideas are influenced by the works on Gidden’s idea of structure<sup>33</sup>, which he defines as ‘the pattern of constraint or practice inherent in a set of social relations’ (ibid.: 97).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Her theory on gender as practice focuses on ‘what people do by way of constituting the social relations they live in and understands the structure of social relations as a condition of all practices’ (Connell, 1987: 62).

<sup>33</sup> Connell identifies three major structures in the field of gender relations: ‘the division of labour, the structure of power and the structure of cathesis. These three structures are closely related to each other. Power relations are reflected in the structure of cathesis; the sexual division of labour is made up of relations of cathesis and is influenced by the structure of power, and vice versa’ (Connell 1987: 98, 116).

<sup>34</sup> It refers to the systematic correspondence between certain group of people and certain type of jobs. It alludes to the permanence of labour market segregation. The idea of structure of power refers to the extension and continuity of social relations of power beyond particular acts of open violence and

For Connell (1987), “structures’ are the main elements of gender regimes within all kinds of institutions: from the family to the state to global institutions, all are crossed by gender relations, and institutions play a key role in the ‘construction of gender categories’ while regulating social practices and relations”(ibid.: 99,130).<sup>35</sup> Categories such as men and women are historically constructed and the biological aspects of men and women can influence only ‘some specific practices such as giving birth or breastfeeding; the rest is socially constructed (ibid.). These ideas and aspects about gender as categories of social construction are therefore, useful in analysing the construction of discourses on gender equality.

Following Connell, this research understands gender as a ‘process’(ibid.140) materializes through reproduction of differentiation and hierarchies, including social relations of power; which is performed and practiced at the social institutions like family and therefore can be deconstructed through institutional mechanisms or policy instruments (in this case social and economic policies). Considering gender as a process entails a possibility of un-doing traditional gender roles that are socially constructed, reproduced and reinforced through socialization process and is therefore can be altered. Eveline and Bacchi argues for conceptualisation of “gender as a verb rather than a noun” (2005: 501). They contend that gender could be seen as an inescapably unfinished gender-*ing* process in which the body both informs and resonates with relations of power and privilege (ibid.).

In her article Barbara J. Risman (2004) also states that gender is a ‘socially constructed stratification system’ (p: 430). What made her argument relevant for this research is- “how structure limits human agency and influence social relations and how human agency also produces, maintains and transforms structure” (ibid.: 433). Risman explains that as gender is rooted in society; it acts as a catalyst through which all the individual, cultural and institutional dimensions converge and embedded with

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oppression. The structure of cathesis is the structure that organizes emotional and sexual relations among persons.

<sup>35</sup> Connell defines ‘construction’ as giving a particular content to a social category, establishing particular contrasts with and distances from other social categories, and constituting an interest around which identity and action can be organized’ (Connell 1987: 137).

each other through their causal mechanisms<sup>36</sup> which further help in producing or transforming gender. This view is relevant for this research, as it situates such perspective of 'gender' in the context on Sweden. In Sweden, gender is viewed in terms of social categories, created and informed with social structures and norms, and which is therefore altered through these dimensions and bring transformation.

This research analysis focuses on different aspects that in Risman's terms are connected to the institutional and the interactional domains. Following Risman, this research explores institutional practices (in this case, the doings of policy making at the level of the EU and Sweden), legal regulations (i.e. policies and proposals), and ideology which formulate various discourses which further practiced as complied norms. This research therefore, argues that organisational practices and the gender policies framed at the institutional level, work as social mechanisms which produce gender inequality at the institutional level and in turn influence the interactional and individual levels.

This research therefore, relates the institutional policymaking at the individual level. The idea is that policy documents can do 'gender-ing' or 'un-gendering' rooted gender roles in society which in a way produces wider gender inequality. Policy discourse do gender in a specific way, depending on the way it is formed or perceived as a problem in the process of policy making, thus contributing to the reproduction of gender (in)equality. The research understands gender as process and therefore can be altered through policy mechanisms and instruments. With this exploration, the research therefore, aims to situate gender mainstreaming in the Swedish policy discourse and the respective policy proposals.

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<sup>36</sup> Risman identifies three levels or dimensions through which gender structure is being reproduced: the individual, interactional (of cultural expectations), and institutional dimensions (2004: 433). Individual dimension is reflected through socialization, internalization; identity work and construction of selves, status expectations, and cognitive bias are mostly connected at the interaction level; and the institutional level gets influenced through organizational practices, legal regulations, distribution of resources, and ideology. The idea is that it is not socialization or internalization alone, nor only status expectations or ideology that explains the reproduction of the gender structure but the combination of all of these (Cited in Doloros Calvo, 2013: 23).



### ***1.3 Debates and Discussions around Gender Issues in Europe***

#### ***1.3.1 Gender Equality in Europe: The Contested Notion***

‘Gender equality is a contested notion in general which acquires its ambiguity partly because of “its frequent appearance as a harmonious and a conflictual concept, either due to a tendency to homogenize diversity under a dominant norm (in case of the European Union) or due to an explicit ‘strategic framing’ of the concept to make it enter more easily into the policy agenda as a common accepted goal” (Verloo and Lomberdo, 2007: 22). There is little agreements among research scholars, political actors, and civil society organisations over the uniform meaning of what is gender equality or what should it means to achieve gender equality and as such the notion receives varied treatment across societies, nations, and countries. The concept is seen as an ‘empty signifier that takes as many meanings as the variety of visions and debates on the issue allow it to take’ (ibid.)

At the EU level, the notion of gender equality seems to have articulated through three major visions which further gets translated into various strategies:

“(i) Gender equality can be conceptualised as a problem of achieving equality as sameness (this is linked to the strategy of equal opportunities); (ii) Affirming difference from the male norm (this is aligned with strategy of positive actions, although they are not limited to it); (iii) Transforming all established norms and standards of what is/should be female and male (it relates to the strategy of gender mainstreaming to achieve the goal)” (Rees 1998; Walby 2005; Squires 2005).

All these three visions are marked as ““inclusion”, “reversal”, and “displacement” whereby each of them refers to the principles of equality, difference and transformation respectively (Squires 1999; 2005).” And these three visions seek to offer different solutions for achieving gender equality through their conceptual standpoints.

The ‘equality as ‘sameness’ approach considers the problem of inequality lies in the ‘exclusion of women’ from the political domain, so the solution is proposed to include them in the mainstream world without challenging the underlying norm. This framework is based on the idea that ‘each individual, irrespective of gender, should have access to the rights and opportunities enjoyed by men and should be treated

according to the same principles, norms, and standards' (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007). However, the solution based on the principle of sameness has been criticised for being a conformist one, as it does not challenge the dominant patriarchal values which creates gender inequality.<sup>37</sup> The 'approach of difference or reversal' on the other hand questions the underlying male norm that all the gender structure follows and seeks to find solutions in compensating the disadvantageous position of women through positive actions like through the concept of reservations or quota system for women in employment; promotions and participation in the mainstream politics or in the institutional decision making bodies etc.<sup>38</sup>

While the sameness and difference approaches deal with the economic aspect of equality, the vision of 'Transformation'<sup>39</sup> problematizes the gendered world itself and does not see the problem in the exclusion of women from mainstream domain or not meeting out the existing male norm. This approach goes beyond the debate of equality versus difference principle and focuses on deconstructing the socio-political discourse that creates the gendered identity and thus seeks to deconstruct the prevalent gender system. For Squires (2005), this transformative vision of gender equality is apt for conceptualising the strategy of gender-mainstreaming. Because of its flexible nature, gender mainstreaming offers to embrace the variables which could bring gender equality and thus act in concurrence with other gender equality strategies to incorporate gender perspectives in to the mainstream policies and deconstruct the established categories. Mainstreaming gender across policy areas necessitate, according to Walby, a multifaceted interaction between diverse gender regimes and their policy areas and to identify the specificity of each domain that leads to particular gender equality politics and policies "to understand whether changes in one domain are likely, ultimately, to have implications for other domain" (Walby 2005: 328).

In analysing the gender mainstreaming strategy within the framework of social and economic policies in Sweden, what is significant is to contextualise its progressive gender equality policy within the dynamic framework of welfare state and gender in order to explore how the perspective of gender equality marks the welfare discourse

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<sup>37</sup> "The principle of sameness aspires to a gender-neutral world in which women are treated as if they were equal to men and is commonly linked to the liberal tradition of feminism" (Squires 1999).

<sup>38</sup> "This vision frequently is associated with radical and cultural feminists" (Squires 1999).

<sup>39</sup> This originates in the post-modern feminist discourse on gender equality.

in Europe and its subsequent policy frames. The conceptual terms like care, autonomy, citizenship, independence, political agency, and equal rights form the basis for dynamic analysis of gender and welfare states. It is impossible to see the mutually constitutive relation between gender and welfare states without these conceptual and theoretical variations. All these provide a theoretical support for the research.

### ***1.3.2 Gender and Welfare State in Europe***

Various comparative studies pertaining to welfare state<sup>40</sup> plays a significant role in feminist theory and the research on gender (Theobald, 1999: 11).<sup>41</sup> ‘The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism’ by Gosta Esping Andersen (1990) provides a set up for exploring the gendered nature of welfare states and its policy mechanisms. In his pioneering work, Andersen set out to consider the relationship between work and welfare, where work is defined as paid work and welfare as policies that permit, encourage or discourage the decommodification of labour (Jane Lewis, 1997). However, what made feminists scholars critical<sup>42</sup> about gendered nature of welfare states and especially his work is that, position of women within the framework of welfare states have been absent from most of mainstream analysis of the welfare regimes especially in the works of Esping-Andersen. They hold that the pioneer work ‘Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism’ although is stimulating and a thought provoking work, it has largely ignored the position of women within the welfare framework. There is a lack of importance given to the unpaid work carried out by

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<sup>40</sup> The Welfare State typically is conceptualized as a state committed to modifying the play of social and market forces in order to achieve greater equality (Ruggie 1984: 11). The policy discourse of welfare states largely focuses on the constitutive element of paid work around which all the social provisions, benefits and regulations is based. However, there has always been a contention among scholars regarding the beneficiaries of such welfare arrangements. In Europe such welfare entitlements were initially based on the idea of ‘citizenship’ which was primarily ‘masculine’. Therefore men were entitled to social rights-to pensions, unemployment, insurance and the like-on the basis of their paid work, however women were considered as ‘second class citizens’ and as such women’s access to welfare benefits was usually mediated by their relationship to men.

<sup>41</sup> *Supra note.* 19 at 6

<sup>42</sup> Feminist thinkers have been contesting on the ground of looking into welfare states as run by norms of male hegemony and find an androcentric approach embedded in welfare states’ social-economic policies. They highlighted the fact that women in many cases have been excluded from the citizenship rights which are usually attributed to men (involving right to accessing social security as an equal wage earner) and said that the concept of citizenship and the rights attached to it were not universalistic but exclusively male oriented (the right to possess property, the right to an unemployment allowance, the right to vote etc.). The existing social provisions for workers, which were developed with men’s patterns of work and care in mind, have been inadequate for women workers, particularly when they have care giving responsibilities that limit their capacities to be employed and therefore demanded for undoing the gendered nature of European welfare states.

women, who are the primary caregivers in the family and play a larger role in doing this unpaid work of caring and household responsibilities. They also hold that this lack of attention to women's unpaid work have been rooted in the usual reluctance of welfare state to acknowledge unpaid work as productive one.

While exploring diverse regime types and their discreet logic of organization, stratification and societal integration, feminists' scholars considered welfare state as an indispensable pillar in the prevalent of gender order. It is widely held view among feminist scholars that a welfare state, its related policy mechanisms and institutional approach is directly correlated to how that country or state perceives gender relations. As Daly (2000) holds it correctly:

“the study on comparative welfare states may well be a feasible way to explore and understand the causes, types and historical paths of national differences and similarities...with welfare states as ‘agent[s] of shaping gender relations,’ a comparative research can help to answer how this relation proceeds under different institutional and ideological conditions” (2000: 8).

This may explain how the socio-political rights of men and women vary in different types of welfare models.

According to Orloff (1996), gender relations embodied in the sexual division of labour or the gendered forms of citizenship and political participation etc. profoundly shape the character of welfare states. Furthermore the institutions of social provision like social assistance and social insurance programs and universal citizenship entitlements equally affect gender relations. There are two broad approaches that have contributed to the interrelation between gender relations and welfare states:

(i) one that saw states contributing to the social reproduction of gender hierarchies: analysts hold that as modern welfare states transitioned from ‘private’ to ‘public’ patriarchy (e.g. Holter 1984), the gender hierarchy reinstated and maintained through various mechanisms like maintaining gendered divisions of labour with male supremacy prevailing as economic provider and women being the care giver; justifying family wage system and men's relatively superior wages partly due to their supporting role for their dependent wives and children; making women excluded from the paid labour force and making them dependent on men and the state; reinforcing traditional marriage and sexual morality etc. And for many analysts this gender hierarchy or gender inequality is regulated, reproduced and maintained through welfare state policies. Social reproduction analysts highlighted the manners in which

welfare states seek to reinforce and practice pre-existing (traditional) gender roles and relations, therefore constitute gendered citizenship. In this construction of gendered citizenship, male independence is highlighted even as women's material position is improved, and their position is made dependent;

(ii) second which saw states having an ameliorative impact of gender inequality. Analysts also hold that welfare state works to ameliorate social inequalities-feminists' perspective relates this view to gender as well as class inequalities, especially in vulnerability to poverty. It is noted that feminization of poverty has been prevalent across welfare states since World War II. And this is due partly to the giving attention to other demographic groups (e.g. the elderly) but also to some women's deteriorating position in the labour market and the rising rates of solo motherhood.

However, the feminists found out cross-national variations and impact of policy outcomes on such problem. For example: studies related to poverty of women consistently find that United States has the highest poverty levels, followed closely by Canada and Australia; Britain looks considerably better than its 'daughter' countries, while Germany's poverty rates for solo others are quite a bit higher than is the case in other European countries' (p: 53-56).

However, in the comparative analysis of welfare states, Scandinavian scholars very often disagreed on the perception about welfare states' role in reproducing gender hierarchy and social policies unlikely to promote women's interests (see Haas 1992, Ruggie 1984, Hernes 1987), and therefore, they strongly differentiate Scandinavian countries from their other European counterparts in this matter. Ruggie's (1984) study of state policies of Sweden and Britain elaborates the effective positive impact of state policies on women's overall progress: "for the successful achievement of their employment pursuits, women must be incorporated into government coalition" (p:346).

Political scientist Nancy Fraser (1994) spelled out some evaluative standards for social policy which may contain some principles that make it effective for bringing gender equality. These principles include:

"prevention of poverty, prevention of exploitable dependency, gender equality in income, leisure and respect, promotion of women's participation on a par with men in all areas of social life, and the reconstruction of andocentric institutions so as to welcome human beings who can give birth and who often

care for relatives and friends, treating them not as expectations, but as ideal-typical participants” (p. 599-600).

She further argues that to make social policy more effective, it requires to “deconstruct gender by inducing men to become more like what most women do now—that is, people who do primary care work.. This would dismantle the gendered opposition between breadwinning and care-giving’(p. 611).

### ***1.3.3 Interfacing Gender, Care and Social policy***

The issue of unpaid work particularly the concept of ‘Care’ forms the core part of many feminist understandings of gender and welfare (Daly and Lewis 2000; Finch and Groves 1983; Folbre 2008; Glenn 1992; Land 1978; Lanslett and Brenner 1989; Lewis 1992; Waerness 1984). Gender analysts consider care<sup>43</sup> as a socially necessary activity, but are critical about its gendered character. For them, care is predominantly women’s work, not a “naturally” feminine emanation of familial love, and is usually linked with other forms of domestic labor (England 2005; England and Folbre 1999; Himmelweit 1995).

Most of the mainstream studies particularly the feminist discourse on gender mark ‘care’ as reinforcing the normative male hegemony with its traditional alignment towards gendered character and as a potential barrier to women’s employment. They found that welfare capitalism and its policies were designed around the distinction between *symbolic* and *material reproduction* activities, i.e. on the false assumption that child bearing is inherently symbolic and less material than other work. However, this notion has been constantly criticized on the ground that unpaid work of women is equally productive and hence should be given equal attention too. In one of her prominent work, Nancy Fraser said (1985):

“I claim that it is not the case that childrearing practices serve symbolic as opposed to material reproduction. Granted, they comprise language-teaching and initiation into social mores, but also feeding, bathing and

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<sup>43</sup> While contextualizing care within the welfare discourse, the gender analysts had focused on the intrinsic relations among gendered divisions of labor, models of family life, and social policy. During the aftermath of WW II era, there was the prevalence of male breadwinner family in which man became the prominent earner and the wife performed the domestic care labor, even if she was also employed. Such traditional arrangement was mostly prevalent among working class and was limited to the period between World War II and the early 1970s (Thistle, 2006) and was called the “Golden Age” of welfare states.

protection from physical harm. Granted, they regulate children's interactions with other people, but also their interactions with physical nature (in the form, for example, of milk, germs, dirt, excrement, weather and animals).<sup>7</sup> In short, women not only contribute to the construction of children's social identities but also the biological survival of society which they belong to. Thus, child rearing is not per se symbolic reproduction activity; it is equally and at the same time material reproduction activity too. This is what she termed as "dual-aspect" activity."<sup>44</sup>

For many decades, welfare policies seem to have not addressed this unpaid work. Many critiques hold that while the gender divisions in paid work have been a concern for the mainstream welfare discourse over the time and have substantially been reduced by bringing a huge number of women in to the labour market, there is some evidence that shows that the division of unpaid work has changed a little (Gershuny et. al 1994). Several feminists' thinkers therefore sought to emphasis, on the dynamic relationship between paid work, unpaid work and welfare (Taylor-Gooby 1991) and seek to undo this gendered aspect of the welfare discourse.

The contemporary policy discourse on European welfare states with respect to its orientation towards gender equality perspective is changing its outlook by giving a "farewell to maternalism" (Orloff 2006) and validates for an "adult worker family,"<sup>45</sup> that supports economic independence of both men and women and therefore support their equal participation in paid and unpaid work. This has transformed the previous arrangements of care and household responsibility taken care of by women across various welfare states. Acknowledging women's importance is gained momentum across the world as well as at the EU level over the last few decades. The previous approach of seeing women as objects of patriarchal sexist welfare state during the

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<sup>44</sup> Nancy Fraser (1985) was referring to the works of Habermas (*The Theory of Communicative Action*) saying: 'On the one hand, claims Habermas, societies just reproduce themselves materially; they must successfully regulate the metabolic exchange of groups of biological individuals with a non-human, physical environment and with other social systems. On the other hand, societies must reproduce themselves symbolically; they must maintain and transmit to new members of the linguistically elaborated norms and patterns of interpretation which are constitutive of social identities...according to Habermas, in capitalist societies, the activities and practices which make up the sphere of paid work count as material reproduction activities since, on his view, they are social labor and serve the function of material re-production. On the other hand, the child rearing activities and practices which in our society are performed without pay by women in the domestic sphere - calling it women's unpaid childrearing work - and count it as symbolic reproduction activities'. See for more details in Fraser 1985.

<sup>45</sup> 'Individualisation' in the context of Europe is related to self-sufficiency and independence. Women's labour market participation led to arise various types of individualized earning models in Europe. This individualised model is defined variedly as 'dual-earner' model, 'adult worker model', 'one-and-a-half earner model' across the EU countries. Pascall and Lewis (2004) note that while male breadwinner model of Western Europe and the dual worker model in Central and Eastern Europe have been undermined, they have not been replaced by new gender models.

1980s was replaced with the new perspective where the focus has now shifted to consider '*men as the agent of change*'. This new perspective emerged since the beginning of 20th century with the changes in social economic structure and the consequent shift of 'male breadwinner model' towards the 'adult-worker model' has taken place in the EU and internationally (Dackweiler, 2010a)<sup>46</sup>. This trend towards '*individualisation*' also gained prominence and initiated an era of a egalitarian gender regimes which depend on equal – synonymous with non-discriminatory–access to social rights and participation (Dackweiler & Schäfer, 2010).<sup>47</sup>

The research holds that most of the European social policies were framed following the demand of the productivist model of globalised economy, which the EU is a part of. This has led to put issue gender equality in purely economic terms like raising salaries to the same level; labour integration; financial assistance policies, etc. There are very few examples of European socio-economic policies which are actually directed to reduce the 'cultural gender stereotypes' which is produced in the family.<sup>48</sup>

Responding to the demand of new development framework, however, the Nordic Countries promoted a new discourse on engaging men in to the gender equality framework and it formulated various social and economic policies as a catalyst for such engagement. Efforts were taken up to bring transformation in men's attitudes/perspective towards traditionally set up gender roles through 'sharing responsibility' in care giver role and household responsibilities. Probably the most important initiatives have been taken by Sweden<sup>49</sup> among its Nordic partners. Since 1970s, Sweden has been constantly encouraging men to become a part of gender equality framework and ensured their participation in sharing responsibility and care

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<sup>46</sup> *Supra note*. 19 at 12

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>48</sup> In her crucial article titled 'Rational Fools or Cultural Dopes', Naila Kabeer (2000) criticizes the dominant approach in economic analyses that identifies decisions taken within the family as determined by simple rational economic choices related to salaries and income. Kabeer underlines the problematic nature of decision making while analyzing it in the context of Third World countries. For example, the behavior of Arab women is partially explained by the internalization of certain cultural norms that define how these societies work.

<sup>49</sup> Among Nordic countries, Sweden has probably received the most of scholarly attention for its revolutionary practices and policies regarding gender equality. It has been leader in the world for gender equality for a decade now. According to World Economic Forum's global gender gap 2014 report, it ranks number one for women in ministerial positions, enrollment in tertiary education and women in technical and professional roles. Sweden has also pioneered in many fronts with respect to transforming gender relations like individualizing taxation to promote dual earner model; setting up individual rights to social security; and also decriminalizing prostitution etc. For more details see <http://www.thelocal.se/20141028/sweden-remains-fourth-best-for-gender-equality>.



work at home. The active participation of fathers in parental leave insurance is one such example. The underlying idea here is not only to engage men in to the caring work, but also to promote gender equality. As a matter of fact, Sweden keeps striving for bringing new innovation all the time. And Gender-mainstreaming remains one of the most innovative strategies in Sweden with respect to achieving gender equality so far. The following segment brings forth the conceptual understanding of gender mainstreaming and its pertinent aspects as well as the contextualization of gender mainstreaming in the EU and in Sweden.

### ***1.4 Conceptualising Gender-Mainstreaming***

#### *1.4.1 Origin of Gender-Mainstreaming*

Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, issue of gender equality became prominent on the global agenda, making the global leaders to revisit the gender perspective in to the development agenda.<sup>50</sup> In the beginning of the UN decade for women (which ended in 1985), the focus was to initiate the process of integrating women into the development framework which eventually stimulated the formation of thousands of Women's organizations across the world. The trend continued and accelerated during the following decades<sup>51</sup> with pronouncing more strongly the need for promoting and protecting the full employment, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women. The year 1995 heralded a new era at World conference on 'Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action' in China by adopting Gender mainstreaming as an integrative approach to development framework. The event witnessed 189 States along with the European Union adopting the Gender Mainstreaming as a uniform gender policy approach in their policy discourse. The first international evaluation on the Beijing Platform for Action took place at the 23rd session of the UN General Assembly, New York in 2000. Often called Beijing+5, it noted that the Gender mainstreaming had been widely accepted as a strategy to improve the effect of public policies for promotion of gender equality within the United Nations system.

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<sup>50</sup> The new development framework shifted away from its previous 'women in development' (WID) approach and was replaced by 'gender and development' (GAD) framework which endorses the strategy of gender-mainstreaming. The innovative element of 'gender and development' (GAD) is that instead of focusing on women, an 'integration of a gender equality perspective' into all the development policies are aspired to be taken up in an effort to tackle broader gender issues and structural inequality, thus seeking to transform society and social justice for all people.

<sup>51</sup> In 1993, during the Vienna World Conference, it was proclaimed that women's rights were human rights; in 1994 the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development placed women's empowerment and health at the Centre of sustainable Development Programmes.

### *1.4.2 Gender-Mainstreaming as a Policy Strategy*

While there are many analytical and diverse definitions exist with respect the strategy of gender-mainstreaming, the definition set forth by Teresa Rees (2005) is considered as the most appropriate one for this research. According to Teresa Rees, ‘gender-mainstreaming is the promotion of gender equality through its systematic integration into all systems and structures, into all policies and procedures, into the organizations and its culture, into ways of seeing and doing’ (Rees 2005: 560). Rees further argues that Gender Mainstreaming is about ensuring that systems and structures do not (...) indirectly discriminate on the grounds of gender” (ibid.). She goes on to express that gender mainstreaming is about identifying “the andocentric practices that underpin the organisation and its culture as well as its policies and practices, and tackling them”(ibid.: 560). ‘Gender mainstreaming moves away from accepting the male, or rather a dominant version of masculinity as the norm’ (ibid.: 559).<sup>52</sup>

The work of Nancy Fraser, which is primarily centred around the concept of ‘integrative theory of social justice’<sup>53</sup>, and the principle of ‘participatory parity,’ can be useful in analysing how gender equality can be achieved through the ‘gender-mainstreaming process.’ For her, both these notions contribute to the achievement of gender equality and social justice. Unlike her counterpart Barbara Bergman (1999)<sup>54</sup>, who emphasises on the importance of redistribution of monetary resources in achieving gender equality, Fraser focuses on the importance of an integrative

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<sup>52</sup> Her concept of gender mainstreaming resembles the UN’s definition which was put forth during the Beijing Conference: “[Gender equality] refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men (...) Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development (WomenWatch, 2001)”. For more details see <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet1.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup> “Fraser’s early framing of this theory is concerned primarily with inequality and injustice in the context of global capitalism and the increase in cultural diversity in modern society that it carries in its terrain. She argues for a ‘dual perspective’ approach that distinguishes two types of injustice, those of misrecognition and maldistribution, rooted respectively in the cultural domination that is perpetuated through the status order and the economic system of modern capitalism. ‘cultural or symbolic’ injustice rooted in ‘social patterns of representation etc.’ She further identifies three types of socio-economic injustice namely, ‘Exploitation (appropriation of fruits of labour’; ‘Economic marginalisation (restriction to undesirable or poorly paid work, or denial of access to incomes’; and ‘Denial of an adequate material standard of living’ (Fraser 1997: 14).

<sup>54</sup> ‘For Bergmann, gender policies need to follow strategies that allow gainful work for both men and women. Only when there are no gender-specific arrangements which put men and women into unequal positions and situations, parity could be achieved.

approach that combines a politics of redistribution with a policy of recognition (Fraser 2004: 34).

Besides this, she relates ‘participatory parity’<sup>55</sup> with respect to the achievement of social justice. For Fraser (2007):

“measures of a society is fair to the extent that it makes participation possible for all members, that it ensures a parity of participation in the construction of institutionalized value patterns, in process of deliberation about the rules of redistribution; and more generally, in all forms of social interaction”<sup>56</sup>.

For her, the parity of participation applies to all the arenas of social interaction; be it the family, our personal lives, employment, or the market, or formal or informal politics as well as various associations that are formed in civil society. So the respective understanding of parity must be tailored to the kind of participation at issue, which depends on the nature of the social interaction in question (Fraser 2004: 29.). Having all these ideas together, Fraser developed the ‘status model of recognition’ which aims to “deinstitutionalize andocentric patterns of value that impede gender parity” (Ibid.: 31). Fraser focuses on the aspect of recognition saying that this leads to a new approach to gender justice which includes questions of distribution, representation, identity and difference.

Fraser views gender as a category that is compound of both status and class and which combines a political-economic with a cultural- discursive face (Fraser, 2004). Hence, for Fraser, Feminist politics<sup>57</sup>, need to be operating at two levels considering redistribution and recognition as complementary elements to each other in the way to claim justice and equality, which in turn will display the patterns of values that deprive women of their equal participation opportunities: “only by looking to

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<sup>55</sup> She defines ‘parity’ as a qualitative condition that basically means ‘being peer’, ‘being on a par with others’ or ‘interacting with each other on equal footing’ (Fraser, 2004: 29).

<sup>56</sup> Cited in Estelle Ferrarese 2014: 5.

<sup>57</sup> Her kind of feminism locates gender relations on the terrain of *political economy*, while seeking to expand that terrain to encompass *care* work, reproduction and, as from the 1990s, recognition. Care work in particular is given great importance in her work, as it gives Fraser grounds for rejecting the temptation to try and incorporate women as wage-earners in capitalist society and for thinking the transformation of the deep structures and animating values of capitalist society – which implies, for instance, that wage work should be decentered while unpaid care work, carried out by women and essential to society’s well-being, should be valorized. In her work on the importance of care work and its allocation within a household, Fraser established an alternative welfare state concept with the “universal care worker” which shall help to combine the welfare state, its social policy, its paid and unpaid (care) work (Fraser 1997)

integrative approaches that unite redistribution and recognition can we meet the requirements of justice for all” (p. 34). In order to implement gender parity and equality, need to inform the following requirements: “A fair and equal distribution of resources and of the access to socio-political and economic decision-making structures must be ensured; the focus must be to open up the view on the authoritatively structured institutionalised gender-specific attributions; heterogeneous identities and ways of life must be recognized” (ibid.). This last policy requirement is relevant for understanding the underlying tone of gender mainstreaming as it aims to change the existing socio-political and economic structures and it also contains the principle of participatory parity as its normative benchmark.

At the EU level, gender mainstreaming is being defined as:

“the (re) organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making (Council of Europe, 1998: 15).”

And all the member States are required to incorporate the vision and ideas of gender mainstreaming. However, there are critical views held by various scholars with respect to the effectiveness of gender-mainstreaming at the EU.

For many research scholars, the EU has not been able to bring much outcome in bringing greater equality owing to an economic orientation of all gender equality policies. While analyzing gender mainstreaming in the European Union, Hafner-Burton and Pollack (2000) affirms that the ambitious agenda of gender equality has been maintained along the comparatively narrow neo-liberal front of workplace legislation. They spelled out that although a gender perspective has been incorporated into the existing policies<sup>58</sup> in an attempt to transform EU discourses and policy procedures and even the national policies, a radical change of the EU agenda from a gender perspective seems to be a far reaching step (p. 453). Their analysis reflect upon the fact that gender mainstreaming in the EU have strategically framed gender issue to get ‘fit’ into the dominant efficiency dimension of gender mainstreaming that seeks to attain economic growth by incorporating gender into the policy process. This

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<sup>58</sup> ‘Pollack and Hafner-Burton examine five issue areas: Development, Structural Funds, Employment and Social Affairs, Competition and Science, Research and Development’ (Cited in Doloros Calvo, 2013: 38).

hinders the advancement of gender mainstreaming process and therefore makes it uneven process (Ibid.: 440, 450).

The strategy of gender mainstreaming was not able to bring much transformation in EU because of various reasons: for some scholars, gender equality policy in the EU contains a ‘twin-track’ approach consisting of Gender-mainstreaming and Positive Actions. While the former means proactively adjusting the respective politics, the latter signifies concrete measures for the improvement of the women’s societal situation (Rees, 2005). Therefore, Gender mainstreaming in the European Commission has not been put forth as an alternative to other gender equality policy approach like ‘equal-treatment’ or ‘positive actions’, but as a supplement to them, trying to accomplish additional objectives. This escapes its long term transformative effect in the EU Policy making process –which is to serve the primary goal of transforming gender role and relations. Rounaq Jahan (1995), aptly labels the process of gender mainstreaming in the EU as part of “integrationist” approach as against an “agenda-setting” one.<sup>59</sup> The former approach seeks to introduce gender perspective into existing policy processes, but does not challenge existing policy paradigms, however, the latter involves a fundamental rethinking, not simply of the means or procedures of policy making, but of the ends or goals of policy from a gender perspective (Hafner and Pollack, 2002: 351, 364; See also Poulsen 2006:4-6)<sup>60</sup>. It can be argued that the European Union has generally adopted an integrationist approach to gender mainstreaming, integrating women and gender issues into specific policies rather than rethinking the fundamental aims of the European Union from a gender perspective (Rees 1998).

In case of the Member States, all are sought to conform to the Gender mainstreaming.<sup>61</sup> However, there are great deals of variations across Member States with respect to a uniform understanding and implementation of it. The term is acquired with multiple meanings in the political and academic domain: “as the implementation differs from state to state, the various historical and cultural initial

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<sup>59</sup> Jahan (1995) has been referred by Pollack and Hafner-Burton in the identification of these two different perspectives to gender mainstreaming.

<sup>60</sup> Echoing Jahan, Hafner and Burton also found that gender mainstreaming strategy has been used as effective means to the ends sought out by the EU policy makers rather than projecting it as an effective mechanism to challenge those ends.

<sup>61</sup> With the Treaty of Amsterdam, Gender mainstreaming found its way into the European law (Kantola, 2010). Since then, the EU Members need to incorporate gender mainstreaming strategy into their national laws and to actively support equality measures.

positions within the Member States are important (Meuser & Neusüß, 2004).”<sup>62</sup> Therefore, most of member states are having specific gender egalitarian objectives which is usually fed with cultural traditions and institutional involvement which leads to create a plurality of gender-political goals across the EU. Besides, the little disagreements among the Member States “as to what Gender Mainstreaming actually means, especially among those responsible for implementing it” (Rees 2005: 556). As the term does not translate well from English into other European languages, and as there often is no word for ‘gender’, in most Member States the English term is used (ibid.). And this variation in approaches validates the absence of a concrete gender equality goal at the EU level.<sup>63</sup>

Implementation of gender mainstreaming in Sweden has been relatively different and unique as compare to its European counterparts. The relative success of gender mainstreaming in Sweden owes a great deal not only to the presence of a progressive gender equality policy framework in Sweden but also to the inherent socio-historical and cultural set up which together with Swedish welfare commitments made it all possible. Being an “ideally social democratic welfare state (Förster *et al.*, 2014), Sweden strongly supports men and fathers in order to achieve gender equality (Jalmert, 2004).”<sup>64</sup> It puts a strong emphasis on men’s care-giving roles while, simultaneously, high female labour market participation is actively supported by the state (ibid.). Engaging men into gender equality framework is what brings forth a new vision towards gender equality and social change in Sweden.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Supra* note 19 at 18

<sup>63</sup> “However, the absence of an uniform gender equality goal is also taken as an advantage for the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming at the national level, saying this incoherence ensures that Gender Mainstreaming is compatible with various national gender equality policies in Europe and this way the principle of plurality is preserved at the EU level (Meuser & Neusüß, 2004)” See for *Supra* note 19

<sup>64</sup> *Supra* note 19 at 15

<sup>65</sup> Discussed in Chapter 2

## **1.5 Research Methodology**

### *1.5.1 Research Problem*

In spite of a similar framework and objective for gender mainstreaming in the EU and Sweden, the Gender mainstreaming could not yield desired outcome at the EU level and the core objective of gender equality in the EU is overlooked with other priority goals. Although policies and measures have been implemented in order to address the rooted gender inequality at the EU level, they have been mostly dealt with the economic aspects of equality. Presence of other dominant equality policy strategies/measures like ‘equal opportunity policy’ or ‘positive action measures’ seem to be converging with the strategy ‘gender-mainstreaming’ escaping the original values of gender mainstreaming etc. Furthermore, the EU gender equality policies are framed mostly around issues and problems pertaining to women and their lives and thus focus mostly upon facilitating women with supplementary benefits like flexible work schedule, part-time arrangements, maternity leave, and limited child care provisions etc. and mostly do not involve men in such arrangements.

The purpose of this study is to investigate that the existing gender equality strategies at the EU level are not sufficient in reducing gender inequality in European society mostly due to its economic orientation and co-opting nature of gender equality strategies. Sweden on the other hand has been successful to a greater extent in reducing gender inequality from its society. The overall objective is therefore to explore, to what extent the degree of gender equality has been achieved in Sweden. The idea is to see if there is coherence between welfare state commitments to achieving gender equality and implementation of gender mainstreaming strategy. The research investigates the prominent factors that led to incorporate the strategy of gender mainstreaming into the social and economic policies in Sweden and whether it has yielded positive and substantial outcome so far. The study also seeks to understand if the initiatives taken by Sweden reflect upon a new gender discourse in the direction to achieve gender equality. The study further explores the process of gender-mainstreaming at EU and Sweden and illustrates the problems and barriers which come in way to the successful implementation of gender-mainstreaming in the European Union.

### *1.5.2 Rationale and Scope of the Study*

Inequality exists as a universal fact. More so it exists in social and economic sphere. While making the current state of (as of 2010) of gender equality in the EU comparable, the European institute for gender equality (EIGE) has created the Gender Equality Index (EIGE, 2014). And this index features Sweden as the leading country in all six dimensions<sup>66</sup> : “the country’s overall score is 74.3 (out of a 100) points which is both high above the EU average. With respect to measured categories the index places Sweden as the most gender-egalitarian country across Europe. Sweden is ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in Development Index (HDI) Report 2014<sup>67</sup>. According to the UN, it has the third lowest infant mortality rate in the world. All these indicators not only support the position of Sweden as the most equal country among most of the countries in the world, it can be seen as a forerunner in equality policies in Europe.<sup>68</sup> Sweden is currently leading the EU in statistics measuring equality in the political and education system.

The undertaken study is on Sweden which has achieved some milestones in terms of achieving gender equality within its society, yet with some existing gaps. However, with continuous efforts and innovative strategies, it has been able to reduce this problem substantially. Despite being top-down and centrally orchestrated, Sweden has been relatively successful because of the presence of a progressive gender equality policy and which resulted into flourishing the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming across policy areas.

The scope of this research is to find how the strategy of gender-mainstreaming is being defined in Swedish policy discourse leading to effective implementation of the same. Despite some gaps in some areas, the overall outcome is much positive in Sweden. The presence of progressive gender equality policy together with the welfare commitments led to such remarkable success. Moreover, the Swedish government has

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<sup>66</sup> The GEI compares the 27 EU Member States (as of 2010) in six core dimensions of gender equality: work, money, knowledge, time, poverty and health. Each category is measured on a scale ranging from 1 (= inequality) to 100 (= equality). Also a total score that combines the single values is created in order to make the points comparable. Annex 7.3 provides an overview of the values appointed to Sweden in the various categories and compared to the other EU Member States.

<sup>67</sup> Sweden’s HDI value for 2014 is 0.907

<sup>68</sup> “With Denmark (73.6) and Finland (73.4) holding the top position in Gender Equality Index (EIGE), reflect the exceptional position of Nordic countries with regard to gender equality” (EIGE, 2014). The low inequality rate is a common feature of the Nordic welfare model as mentioned in the literature (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Kangas & Kvist, 2013)



been increasing the resources available for gender equality policy measures over the years<sup>69</sup> which has pushed gender mainstreaming to a higher level with more expected outcome. The research would foray upon some initiatives namely, parental leave, public child care, individual taxation, along with some labour market initiatives in order to find a causal relations between these policies and gender equality. This will also help in exploring whether the values of gender mainstreaming has been implemented through this initiatives.

The rationale of the study lies in the assumption that with the help of parental leave, individual taxation and public child care, a new gender discourse is underway which focuses on economic independence for women as well as men's sharing responsibility in the traditionally assigned gender roles. This therefore seeks to alter the traditional gender relations and pave the way for a transformative society. In the context of ongoing crisis in Europe, like the demographic crisis, the declining fertility, marriage dissolution, emergence of single parents etc, this research is helpful to explore what effective solutions Sweden can offer through its state policies in order to mitigate such imminent crisis. What is more needed is to deconstruct the notions of family and renegotiate the boundaries between traditional gender roles, the public and the private, thus ensuring the democratisation of gender relations within family and at the work place. And Sweden seems to be heading in that direction with its application of gender-mainstreaming strategy.

### *1.5.3 Research Questions*

The proposal will seek to critically assess gender-mainstreaming in social-economic policies in Sweden taking into consideration the following questions:

1. What is the nature of gender equality policy in Sweden?
2. What are the factors that led to developing and implementing strategy of gender mainstreaming in Sweden?

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<sup>69</sup> During the span of 2007–2010, it has set aside SEK 400 million per year, which is more than ten times as high as the allocation for the previous term of office. Also during 2009, the government has presented a strategy for gender equality in the labour market and in the business sector, in the form of a written communication to the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament). This strategy seeks to coordinate and develop gender equality measures targeting social and economic life particularly working life, business, education policy and social policy. See Swedish Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality (2009)

3. What are the policies and initiatives through which gender equality is sought to achieve in Swedish society? What are the impacts or how far these initiatives have been effective in transforming gender relations in Sweden?
4. To what extent strategy of gender-mainstreaming at the EU level differs from Swedish policy discourse with respect to its approach and orientation? And what are the barriers and challenges come in way which affect the process of gender- mainstreaming to its true sense?
5. To what extent can Swedish experience of gender equality policy be emulated as a model at the EU level or across the European countries?

#### *1.5.4 Hypothesis*

1. The presence of progressive gender equality policy together with Swedish welfare commitments led to the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming in Sweden.
2. The success of the strategy of gender-mainstreaming in Sweden is being emulated at EU level.

#### *1.5.5 Research Methodology, Research Design and Conceptual Model of Analysis*

The present research is studied at two level: The First phase involves the analysis of existing literature (primary and secondary) containing books, journals, peer reviewed articles, various policy reports, policy proposals, and texts, evaluations, mid-term development reports, various legal documents like Treaties and amendments of the EU, official statements of Swedish Government, social media ('Local'-the Swedish prime online News paper) etc. All these helped in developing a conceptual understanding on gender equality in Sweden and the European Union.

For a comprehensive understanding, the materials were explored through recommendations and readings of books and journals and followed by their cross references to other authors. Also the literature for the study were selected on the basis of relevance of the text/journals/policy documents to the issue rather than to a strict timeline. However, to follow a systematic approach, the materials followed a tentative timeline from 1994-to the recent developments. The reason for choosing this period has to do with observing a pattern over the concept, methods and policy discourse on gender mainstreaming in Sweden as well as at the EU level since 1994. The analysis

helps the research compares developments and gaps in both the set up, therefore, exploring scopes and challenges in emulating Swedish gender mainstreaming strategy at the EU level. Also the reason for choosing the 1994 as a year of reference is that Gender-mainstreaming was materialised for the first time in this year in Sweden and was later introduced in 1996 in the EU. This substantially helped in analysing and problematising the research as well as the consequent development in both the EU and Sweden.

As the research seeks to study wider gender equality policy and the strategy of gender mainstreaming within the framework of social and economic policies in Sweden, an attempt is made to find coherence between natures of gender equality policy, its welfare set up and rooted socio-cultural history. To this direction, a descriptive analysis of Sweden is taken up. This analysis is further informed with the feminist epistemology<sup>70</sup> and discourse analysis<sup>71</sup>, which allows for exploring dynamics of gender equality in policy discourse in Sweden. Simultaneously, the study also analyses the gender equality policy at the EU level. Both these approaches help in identifying how gender equality and gender mainstreaming as a concept or strategy is defined and problematised in policy areas resulting into making of various policy framework and its effective representation. Therefore, the research study analyses those literature, policy documents, official texts etc. to look for keywords, definition, and word meanings in order to create a pattern or structure of how 'gender equality' is being defined. The research design is mostly qualitative in nature as the aim here is to gain an understanding of underlying reasons and motivations of the undertaken research study. Besides, the present study, the Swedish welfare states and its progressive gender equality policy make up the independent variable while the implementation of gender mainstreaming becomes the dependent variable as it is influenced by the former ones. In this context, the reference of the EU welfare regimes as well as the EU gender equality policy is also analysed along with its

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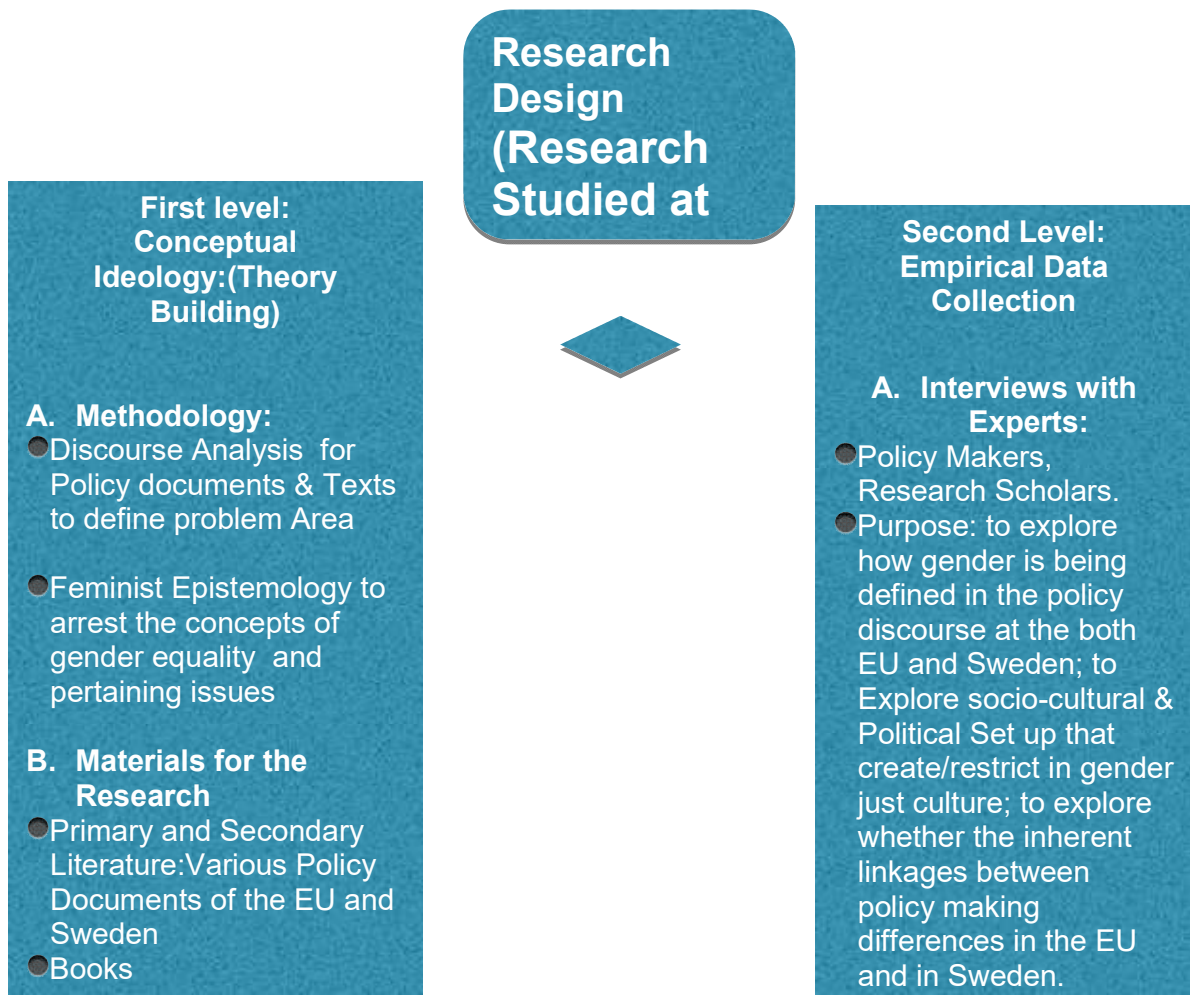
<sup>70</sup> Feminist epistemology is considered to be the most appropriate way to understand women's position as well as gender issues as it brings the researcher a new stance to look beyond the knowledge created by masculine framework which did not take into consideration of women's experiences. Feminist epistemologists like Oakley (1974) and Smith (1988) held the view that "the very way that men have constructed what counts as authoritative knowledge is itself patriarchally constructed". They asserted the need for a new feminist methodology which can interpret the social issue through the lens of how women perceive it.

<sup>71</sup> This research follows Bacchi's discourse analysis approach to discuss how the representation of gender as a problem area in the policy discourse leads to proposed policy solutions for gender inequality issues.

features and characteristics which influence each other while framing the policy discourse. The overall purpose is to explore socio-cultural set up which may have been unique that creates/restricts gender just culture in Sweden. Also the purpose would be to explore whether there is much difference in operationalizing of theoretical concepts at policy making level and in real situation.

The Second phase of the research contains an empirical study which has been conducted through series of interviews (both structured and unstructured) and a survey conducted among research scholars in the Uppsala University, Sweden (location of the field study). The interviews were conducted with diverse respondents representing various domains like academics, policymaking, research organisations etc. which provided first hand and diversified information on the research. These interviews have been used as a primary source for this research as it contains those people, policymakers, academicians, students, and research scholars, civil society groups who are directly or indirectly related to European society and so with the gender issues at large. As gender is an intersecting issue, everyone of this study group were relevant respondent. The overall objective of the interview was to gather and explore informations and opinions regarding various aspects of gender equality, gender-mainstreaming strategy and its relations with social and economic policies. The responses have been helpful in describing whether initiatives to bring fair gender equality made at the policy level has been able to transform mindset in general and how people are responding to such measures and whether they have adopted it in their private life. Besides this, a small quantitative survey was conducted in the Uppsala University, Sweden. The participants for this survey consists of students and research scholars. The survey was conducted during March-May 2014, during which the field study for this research was taken up. This field study was funded together by Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR). The details of the findings of this empirical study are put forth in Chapter 5.

Figure: 2.1 Schematic Illustration of Research Design and Methodology



**Some important official websites:**  
statistiska/scb.sc  
[scb.se/statistic/-publikationer](http://scb.se/statistic/-publikationer)  
Official website of Government of Sweden:  
<http://www.government.se/government-of-sweden/>  
Eurostat  
Official website of European Union:  
[http://europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm)

## ***1.6 Summary of Chapters***

*This research is divided in to six chapters and is briefly discussed below:*

**Chapter 1 Conceptualising Gender Equality, Social-Economic Policy and Gender Mainstreaming in Europe:** This chapter involves the theoretical debates and discussions pertaining to gender equality, welfare state policies and gender-mainstreaming in the context of Europe. While exploring the policy framework of gender equality in the EU and Sweden, this chapter discusses how ‘gender (in)’equality’ is being defined in the respective policy discourse leading to formation of different policy approaches and proposed solutions. The chapter also brings forth various intersecting issues related to gender equality like gender and welfare state, debate on paid and unpaid work, care and social policy are taken up to build a comprehensive understanding of the research study. Most significantly, this chapter introduces the ‘gender mainstreaming as a concept’ and its relevance for this study which mark the starting point to start the second chapter.

**Chapter 2 Gender-Mainstreaming in Policy Discourse: Sweden and the European Union at Cross Roads:** Following Bacchi’s discourse analysis, this chapter problematises policy discourse both at the EU and in Sweden. It starts with analysing how ‘gender (in) equality’ as a ‘problem’ is defined in the respective policy discourse, which in turn forms the respective policy solutions for gender inequality. At the EU level, the problem is mostly defined in terms of women’s lack of economic participation in the labour market and is thus policy proposals find solution in integrating women in to the labour market without addressing the gender inequality produced inside family because of unequal distribution of labour work at home specially in matters of care work and household responsibility. The policies at the EU level usually escape the transformative aspects of gender mainstreaming that is transforming gender relations at the structural level. In case of Sweden, the problem of ‘gender (in) equality’ is defined in terms of unequal shared resources. As such gender equality policies together with welfare commitments are directed to incorporate gender perspective into all the policy areas. This helps in initiating a strong gender mainstreaming framework in Sweden unlike the EU.

**Chapter 3 Interfacing Gender Equality, Socio-economic Policies<sup>72</sup> and Gender-Mainstreaming in Sweden:** This chapter focuses on social and economic policies in Sweden and explores the wider domain of gender equality policy as well as gender-mainstreaming. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section situates the gender equality policy within the framework of Swedish welfare state and analyses various social and economic policies along with some labour market initiatives in order to see whether gender equality perspective has been informed with such policies. Initiatives like parental leave, individual taxation system, public child care, tax reduction in household activities, policy on women entrepreneurship etc. are studied to see to what extent the strategy of gender-mainstreaming is being reflected in these policies and initiatives. The second section will discuss the impact of such initiatives as well as gender-mainstreaming on the overall status of gender relations in Swedish society. The chapter also explores whether all these initiatives could be able to bring transformation in gender relations in Sweden.

**Chapter 4 Sweden as a Model for the European Union:** The chapter discusses the Swedish socio-cultural and political history in order to situate Sweden as a model for gender equality. To this end, the history of Sweden with respect to its social set up along with the rooted gender relations; the religious, economic and political factors which together influence the making of such a progressive gender equality policy. To locate the reasons behind Sweden being a leader in global platform, an analysis of ‘The World Cultural Map’ by Ronald Inglehart and Christian Wezel is taken up. The analysis validates for Sweden’s progressive role of being a modern society with a presence of high degree of rationality and self expression values, both of which contribute to Sweden’s image in the global arena as a gender just society. The chapter also discusses role of the EU being a Normative and supranational actor in an attempt to see to what extent a national gender equality policy (in this case Swedish gender equality policy) can make its way to the EU as a model to be emulated. The chapter further explores the possibilities and challenges that may arise in the way of implementing Swedish model at European level considering the diverse socio-cultural set up of different member states in the EU.

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<sup>72</sup> The concept of social policy used for this word is wide in the sense it incorporates family policy and its various aspects as well. The conditions for family life and family welfare are linked to a variety of changes in working life labour market, housing and policy change in economic conditions, demographic change and changes in policy principles such as the increased emphasis on private solutions for the provision of public services.

**Chapter 5 Gender Equality in Sweden: An Empirical Analysis:** This chapter is the soul of the research. It deals with the empirical analysis informed with interviews and a small survey conducted during the field study. Data and information collection during the field study is broadly analysed through a well balanced diagrams and tables. A detailed perspective on the research study is sought to capture through the interviews. The chapter puts forth those perspectives through a thematic arrangement of the questionnaire. The chapter provides the backbone of this research identifying the ground reality as against the theoretical understanding of the research study.

**Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusion:** After analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data, this chapter forays into the discussion related to the process of development achieved so far with respect to achieving gender equality and how far the mindset of people in Swedish society has changed through all these measures and therefore testify the hypotheses of the research.

The chapter ends with wrapping up the arguments and discussions put forth throughout the research study. It also expresses the limitations of the research study. Besides this, the chapter proposes some suggestions for future research which may be helpful for the policymakers so as to formulate their policies accordingly.



## **Chapter: 2**

### **Gender-Mainstreaming in Policy Discourse: Sweden and the European Union at Cross Roads.**

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At the onset of the research, it is important to understand how the term ‘gender (in)equality’ has been defined or represented as a ‘problem’ in the policy discourse<sup>73</sup> at the level of the EU and Sweden. Identifying such policy problem(s) correlates to the proposed solutions suggested to address the defined problem. To this end, various policy documents and policy texts are taken up for this analysis<sup>74</sup>. An attempt has been made to analyze the perspectives put forth through the meanings and definition of words pertaining to gender equality in the respective policy discourses. The chapter further looks into the wider policy discourse of the EU and Sweden to see how such policy discourse in turn helps to incorporate the gender perspective as a policy objectives into various social and economic policies. The chapter therefore, seeks to investigate the followings: (i) How ‘gender (in)equality’ is being defined and problematized in the policy discourse in the EU and in Sweden? and (ii) What are the proposed solutions provided for addressing the existing problems of gender equality?

#### **2.1 Understanding Policy Discourse:**

The research presupposes the idea that representation of a policy problem(s) in the policy discourse defines the nature of policy making. In the work, *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to be* (1999, 2009), Bacchi holds that, policies represent ‘problem’ in a specific way: ‘how a problem is represented has consequences for ‘how the issue is thought about and [...] how the people involved are treated’ (Bacchi 2009: 1). ‘The task is to identify deep conceptual premise

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<sup>73</sup> The term ‘discourse’ refers to ‘the language, concepts and categories employed to frame the issue...’ (Bacchi 1999: 2). Here it pertains to the discourse of gender equality and how it frames gender equality at both the EU and in Sweden.

<sup>74</sup> In the context of the EU, various EU Treaty documents, policy texts and documents like roadmaps, press releases official statements and reports are being looked at. In addition to this, various databases like Euro Stat, European value Survey, Labour Force Survey have been referred to understand how the term gender equality is being perceived at the EU level. Reference is also taken from Maria Stratigaki’s concept of ‘Co-optation’ in order to interpret how gender equality has been rendered with multiple meanings in the EU which is narrowed down to keep the EU’s economic interest intact. In case of Sweden, the official website of government of Sweden, the press release and some official reports etc. has been the reference point.

operating within problem representation’<sup>75</sup> (ibid.: xix). In other words, ‘looking at what is proposed as a policy intervention will reveal how the issue is being thought about’ (ibid.: 3). Also the ‘policy proposals usually incorporate more than one problem representation and moreover, these representations are often contradictory or competing’ (ibid.:4). The ‘problem’ representation therefore, makes any policy discourse distinct from each other, and it produces effects on different targets. Hence, it is important to unveil those terms and meanings associated with the ‘problem’ area, so as to discover the underlying assumptions, objectives and propositions.

According to Bacchi, focusing on representations require a focus on discourse (1999: 2). That is finding out representations within policy proposals requires an analysis of discourse as well. Adding to this Norman Fairclough (2010),<sup>76</sup> considers discourse as *social practice* (ibid.: 64). For him, ‘it is the practice of constituting social reality by representing and signifying the world’ (ibid.):

‘Discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or constitute them; different discourses [...] constitute key entities in different ways, and position people in different ways as social subjects [...] and it is these social effects of discourse that are focused upon discourse analysis.’(ibid.: 3-4).

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<sup>75</sup> In an attempt to understand the ‘problem’ of gender within policy proposals, some of following guidelines of Bacchi has been made useful for this research: (i)Identify problem representations, by looking at what concrete actions are proposed for dealing with the problem (Bacchi 2009: 2-4). (ii)Identify and critically analyze the understandings (presuppositions and assumptions, and from there conceptual premises or conceptual logic that lie behind that problem?’ representations; what is assumed? What is taken for granted? what is not questioned? (iii)Identify the conditions that allow a particular problem representations to take shape and to assume dominance, that is, the practices and processes that have brought about specific problem representations. The process of identification also involves examining the ‘origins, history and mechanisms of problem representations. Questions such as how gender mainstreaming can be made sense though using key words in the policy documents. (iv)Identify what aspects are left un-problematised in the given problem representation; what issues and alternative perspectives are being silenced within this representation of the problem. Making reference to other theories and accounts framing or interpreting the ‘problem’ would be useful. (v)Identify the effects of problem representations: ‘the ways in which subjects and subjectivities are constituted in discourse and the effects which follow from the limits imposed on what can be thought and said. (vi)Consider how and where ‘problem’ representations were produced and become dominant’(Cited in Doloros Calvo, 2013: 70-71).

<sup>76</sup> Fairclough (2010) tries to combine language analysis and social theory in his approach for discourse analysis. He describes that any instance of discourse can be seen as being simultaneously “a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice” which to a great extent shape the nature and analysis of discourse. Discourse as a ‘text’ accrues to language analysis of texts whereas discourse as a discursive practice refers to the embedded interpretation that the text produces. Discourse as a ‘social practice’ looks into the social aspect of institutional and organisational influence and how it shapes the nature of the discursive practice, and the constitutive/constructive effects of discourse.

The following sections deal with this understanding of policy discourse at both the EU and Sweden and discusses what constitutes different discourses of gender (in)equality and the policy solutions respectively.

### ***2.1.1 Gender (in) Equality in the EU policy Context***

Conceptualising gender equality within the EU policy framework requires a meticulous analysis of the EU Treaties, Directives, and Communications, Recommendations and various other key official reports and documents. “Equality between women and men is enshrined in the EU Treaties and in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights as a fundamental principle of the European Union (EU). Ensuring this is one of the EU's main objectives and tasks” (EIGE, 2013).<sup>77</sup> The Treaty of Rome for the first time incorporated this provision of gender equality in form of ‘equal pay between women and men’ which became the hallmark in later years for future legislations and policies to come to address the issue of gender inequality.

Over the years, gender equality emerged as an indispensable component of the EU political discourse, making it as a ‘community goal’, and ‘fundamental task’ in the EU policy areas and activities. It is recognised as:

“vital to economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness’, as reflected in the Council’s obligation to succeed in EU commitment for gender equality by adopting the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011–2020) (7349/11) and the European Commission’s Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010–2015) (COM(2010) 491, final).”<sup>78</sup>

Achieving gender equality is imperative for carrying out the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy which is based on knowledge, competences and innovation (European Commission, 2013). Its prime importance is being indicated by Viviane Rending as more than a slogan and to be a social and economic responsibility of the European Union. In her words:

“Five decades of European Union action have advanced gender equality on our continent. We have put in place the laws guaranteeing equal pay for equal

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<sup>77</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, (EIGE) 2013. Also available at <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Gender-Equality-Index-Report.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.: 6

work, equality in the workplace and minimum rights to maternity leave. We have made the EU's founding principles a tangible reality in Europeans' everyday lives. This is something we can and should be proud of: gender equality is a European achievement” (Viviane Rending, Brussels, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014).<sup>79</sup>

However many researchers show that economic interest was the driving force behind holding such objectives and promises.<sup>80</sup> They agree that most EU regulations regarding gender relates to the economy, particularly to equality in the workplace (Bergmann 1999, Watson 2000). Since its inception, European Community (now European Union) had designed its ‘inner core’ mostly around economic objectives and interests; however, it had to reason out its existential necessity to be based on the democratic aspects and humanitarian values. The economic interests which acted as a glue-stick for the EU Nation states in their integration process, came under fire because of multifarious reasons like economic recession, demographic deficit, low fertility rate and many more- the situation led to what Joseph Weiler (1999) rightly termed as ‘crisis of ideals’ resulted from “disconcerting realisation that Europe has become an end in itself [...] no longer a means for higher human ends (p: 259). For Larry Sidentorp (2000) the ‘crisis’ has been fuelled by an “economism’ which is pervasive in the activities of the EU with the consequence that, the legitimacy of the European project is at risk without a ‘moral consensus’ that can fuel a substantive political philosophy” (p. 28-40). In addition, various waves of feminism as well as welfare commitments of most of European countries led to ‘re-launching’ of the European Community and the development of a ‘Social face’ of the EU.

The economic undertone continues to reflect in matters of the EU policy documents. For instance, the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010 defines gender equality as ‘a fundamental right, a common value of the EU’ (COM (2006)92 final: 2). It also expresses that “gender equality is a goal in itself, a human right”

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<sup>79</sup> Previous Vice-President of the European Commission/Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship). See for more details at <http://www.genderequality.ie/en/GE/Pages/WP13000060>.

<sup>80</sup> The principle of gender equality as an objective was not on the agenda of European leaders while forming the provisions in the Treaty of Rome. That Article 119 was inserted had to do with the insistence of the French government that it may disadvantage its economy if this policy-a domestic requirement in France-was not to be uniform across Europe (Young, 2000). As Article 119 became significant in the years to come as a spring-board to promote equal opportunity, the social dimension of the Treaty of Rome became constitutionally limited to labour market creation, with the main purpose of social policy being to remove barriers to cross-border mobility among workers (Ibid.: 84). Thus the foundation of the principle of equality was tied to the labour market and employment concerns.

(ibid.: 9) and “a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion”(ibid.: 2) and it ‘contributes to reduce poverty’ (ibid.: 9). Thus the Roadmap defines gender equality in a more substantive and instrumental way. Gender equality in the EU policy context can be seen more than a question of social justice only but as a means towards bringing more substantive economy. Contextualising gender equality within the EU framework, Doloros Calvo expresses that, gender equality in the EU is presented as a means to economic growth and efficiency; for integration and social cohesion; as human right or a value in itself. Different wordings carry different meanings and thus signify reality differently (Calvo, 2013).

Although gender equality is expressed in substantive terms as a value in the fundamental principle of the EU, the instrumental nature of gender equality is given more importance. It is the part of general thinking at the EU level and serves to justify gender policies and the strategy of gender mainstreaming in the EU. The instrumental nature of gender equality is reflected in the European Strategy for growth and employment which recognizes the contribution of gender equality in meeting the Lisbon objectives and demands for promoting better participation of women in the labour market in order to realise that goal. The same tone echoed in the 2008 Mid-Term Progress Report on the ‘Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men’ in which several references were put forth to signify women's labour market participation to the achievement of gender equality:

“The roadmap reaffirmed that economic equality between women and men would only be achieved through greater participation of women employment. The rate of employment among women in the Union will very probably reach the target of 60% in 2010. However, the pay gap between women and men remains wide (50%). [...] legislation will not be enough to eliminate what is still a complex phenomenon, caused in particular by a higher proportion of women in the less well-paid sectors or less secure jobs. There will also be a need to improve the quality of employment for women, an area highlighted in the 2008 report on equality between women and men. (COM (2008)760 final: 3)”.

Many researchers indicate a dualism in approach when it comes to defining gender equality within the EU policy discourse. *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality* (Meier and Verloo, 2009), is a remarkable book in explaining how the concept of gender equality has been hotly contested within European Union and has acquired

different meanings and expressions. While defining gender equality as a political and policy concept which is frequently linked to other policy goals, Meier and Verloo expressed that gender equality is like a “travelling concept in this global process” (ibid.: 1) that alters its meanings as it journeys through times and places.

In the context of the European Union gender equality has been used as various means: “in the 1960s, the EU linked gender equality to unfair competition; in the 1970s and 1980s to combating unemployment; in the 1990s to the Lisbon Criteria of full employment and the knowledge economy and most recently to fighting discrimination and promoting diversity” (Ibid.) The adaptation of gender equality in different directions by the EU has served the need to face the changing dynamics<sup>81</sup> of socio-political and economic changes and not something to do with gender.

Under the pretext of an acclaimed prospect, gender equality therefore, remains a target oriented goal rather than a value oriented one. A usual visit to the official webpage of the European Union can quickly hold the mind of a gender research scholar by surprise, as it contains all the prime policy areas which the EU has been dealing within its institutional framework and surprisingly gender equality does not place there as a prime topic or area. One has to really search through all these areas exploring the link for gender equality. This ambiguity arises due to the fact that gender equality is not considered an independent policy issue and is incorporated across the EU policy areas as an integrated element particularly it has been intertwined with the policy of employment and social rights. Such a placement opens spaces for various interpretations of the term ‘gender equality’ and thus questions the real intension of its presentation. Maria Stratigaki (2004) reiterated her concern, as she spells out that, “the shifts in concepts of the EU gender policy are not accidental, but rather part of the ongoing struggles over the meaning of gender (in)equality in which political actors are involved”<sup>82</sup>. She underlines that while the ‘initial concern

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<sup>81</sup> “To meet the challenge of an ageing society, Europe needs to mobilise people to enter the labour market and to create policies to further promote women’s employment in all age brackets but in particular in the older ages, and to fully utilise the female employment potential among immigrants. The challenge is also to close the gender pay gap and to facilitate reconciliation of work and family life for both women and men’ (COM (2005)44 Final: 6, emphasis added). The report emphasises that “strengthening the position of women in the labour market, guaranteeing a sustainable social protection system, and creating an inclusive society remain fundamental in order to reach the Lisbon goal” (COM(2005) 44 final:6). It also reflects that in order to foster women’s employment, ‘it is necessary to ensure care facilities for dependents’ (COM (2005) 44 final:7).

<sup>82</sup> Cited in Verloo, 2007: 56.

was to promote gender equality, the discussions on work were preceded by mentions of the unequal sharing of tasks within the family, and the need to share was a condition to create equal opportunities for women in the labor market. Later these became incorporated in the European employment strategies of the 1990s, and here they gradually shifted its own meaning<sup>83</sup>.

For Doloros Calvo, in the context of EU policy, women appears to be related to the labour market, economic independence, efficiency and employment. The integration of women in the labour market and the improvement of women's employment in qualitative terms are presented as the main objectives of both gender and employment policies (Doloros Calvo, 2013).<sup>84</sup> The discourse of gender equality in the EU parlance is associated with values of human rights and social justice, however, the wordings are used particularly to frame women as 'in need' or as victims; mainly in relation to issues of gender based violence; gender-based persecution; trafficking; and labour exploitation (ibid.). The table below describes gender equality discourse and its corresponding arguments:

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<sup>83</sup> *Supra note 89 at 57.*

<sup>84</sup> In her work 'What Is the Problem of Gender' Doloros Calvo (2013), has identified different discourses of gender equality at the EU level, namely (i)the efficiency discourse of gender equality; (ii)the economic independence-labour market; (iii)the human rights discourse of gender equality; and (iv)feminist discourse of gender equality. The details are put forth in Table 1.

Table 2.1 Understanding of Gender at the EU level

<b>Discourses of gender equality</b>	Representation of the 'problem' of gender inequality	Arguments and Understandings
Efficiency	Women's lack of participation in labour market, education and training.	Gender equality as an instrument- as a means to economic growth Gender inequality as a problem for the economy.
Economic Independence-Labour Market	Women's lack of economic independence/women's lack of participation in labour market.	Gender equality as an instrument- as a means to economic independence. Gender inequality as a problem of economic dependence and subordination of women.
Human Rights	Women's lack of participation in social/political life and in education.	Gender equality as a value, as substance. Gender inequality as a problem because it hinders human rights.
Feminist	Women's lack of participation in all the above fields/spheres.	Gender equality as value and instrument; as a value in terms of women's rights and an instrument in terms of women's autonomy. Gender inequality as a problem because it hinders democracy and women's rights.

*Source: Doloros Calvo, 2013*



### *2.1.2 Co-optation of Equality Policies*

According to the existing literature, the discourse of gender equality policy in the EU is mostly dominated by three different approaches: they are equal treatment, positive action, and mainstreaming (Rees 1998, 2000, 2002). These three approaches have been connected to each other in an evolutionary logic, with each successive phase developing on the basis of its predecessor. Much feminist writing on equal opportunities at the European level has commented on the narrowness of the way, in which all these approaches were formulated; get co-opted; and twisted, with economic interest of the EU.

First time, the idea of equal treatment was appeared (Article 119; Treaty of Rome, 1957) in form of ‘equal pay for men and women which became the founding principle for the European Community at that time. “This equal treatment was based on the sameness approach: the idea that women and men should be treated the same”(Rees 2002). The approach was however, criticised by many thinkers on the ground, that, here, the emphasis is on women becoming equal to men by entering into previously (demarcated) male domains, and thus male norm remains the standard (Walby, 2005). Hence, this equal treatment framework cannot be seen as addressing genuine gender inequality as encouraging women to become more like men does not tackle the need to re-examine and re-evaluate social roles and values including ‘caring roles’ and care itself (Maddock, 1999); rather it implies that men were taken as the norm ( Rees 2002, p. 2). According to Rees, equal treatment legislation does not cope with the causes of inequality but only attempts to moderate the symptoms. Since it does not analyze the causes of inequality, equal treatment fails to produce equal outcomes (Rees, 1998).

The approach towards gender equality in terms of equal treatment was replaced during 1980s with a new approach called ‘positive action’ or ‘affirmative action’ for women. It is based on the presumption that, even if there are similarities between women and men, there are also differences. Considering women’s unequal position in society, the approach therefore, sought to create conducive conditions for women to overcome their disadvantages in the society. However, “positive action measures do not challenge the culture and practice of mainstream: they simply assist women to fit it”(Ibid: 3). This approach also confronted with a number of criticisms: first, it reinforces the existing stereotypes and the current organization of labour and care

(Fraser, 1997) ; Second, it provides limited possibilities for change (Cockburn, 1991); and Third, it diverts the attention to other problems such as the problem of caring for children and the elderly (Bacchi, 1999).

The approach of gender equality policy shifted again with the idea of ‘gender-mainstreaming’ following the Beijing Women’s Conference in 1995. It carries the idea that policies in pursuit of gender equality will no longer be confined to an equal opportunities ‘ghetto’, but will rather be integrated across all fields of policymaking. However, in reality, this strategy remains rhetorical as it entails elements that are mostly co-opted with previous equality measures and remains a supplementary method to the previous policy strategies.

### *2.1.3 Gender-Mainstreaming in the EU*

After its global recognition as a new strategy to address gender inequality in the Beijing platform, the Third Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1991-1995), introduced the idea of gender mainstreaming within the EU (Startigaki 2005, p. 170) in 1996, recognising that “existing policies were failing to have any impact on the majority of women’s lives and lacked coherence” (Booth & Bennett 2002: 439). The document put forth the need of ‘a new partnership between men and women’ and the necessity of incorporating a gender mainstreaming approach in order to achieve this ‘new partnership’. It defines gender mainstreaming as involving: not restricting efforts to promote to the implementing of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situation of men and women (gender perspective). This means systematically examining measures and policies and taking into account such possible effects when defining and implementing them (COM (96) 67 final: 2, emphasis in the original).

The gender mainstreaming approach continues to get acknowledged as a significant component in various EU policy documents. The Fourth Action Programme on Equal opportunities for Women and Men (1996-2000) proposed by the European Commission (EC)<sup>85</sup> and adopted by the Council, presented mainstreaming as its most

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<sup>85</sup> The European commission and European Community is being used interchangeably.

important component, together with previous specific actions (Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000: 436; see also Stratigaki 2005: 177). It introduced three general themes for gender mainstreaming:

(i) as an ‘organising principle’, implying that gender issues should go beyond the boundaries of the then Directorate-General (DG) Employment and Social Affairs (DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities between 2005 and 2010) to be introduced into all community policies;<sup>86</sup> (ii) It was proposed that Member States should develop methods in order to integrate a gender perspective into all policy areas (Booth & Bennett 2002: 439); (iii) The concern was to promote the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities for both men and women. The limits of the workplace were to some extent trespassed, as the focus moved also to the boundary between paid and unpaid work and the (traditional) roles of women and men (Hoskyns 2000: 53, 54).”

The importance of gender mainstreaming was similarly reflected in the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men. Adopted by the EC in March 2006, the Roadmap advocated for a dual-track approach to gender equality involving gender mainstreaming and specific measures for the betterment of women. The roadmap identifies six priority areas which require the EU action on gender equality:

“(i) economic independence for women and men (employment, social security, etc.); (ii) reconciliation of private and professional life; (iii) equal representation in decision making; eradication of all forms of gender based violence and trafficking; (iv) elimination of gender stereotypes; and Promotion of gender equality in external and development policies-i. e beyond the frontiers of the EU” (COM(2006)92 final: 2).

A close look at all these documents show that while gender-mainstreaming is extended to all the EU policy areas, it is put in a mixed bag together with several other issues that are supposed to be mainstreamed. Gender mainstreaming tends to be working more towards the equality in the labour market; in the numeric aspects of equality (by equal representation of women) or in the matters of gender violence and trafficking and in the overall development process in the EU. However, addressing and mitigating the inequality at the structural level (which is the prime objective of gender mainstreaming)-like the unequal division of labour in the family; the transformation in the traditional gender system by altering gender role relations-is mostly missing in the EU policy discourse.

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<sup>86</sup> The theme here was ‘subsidiary’; and the idea was to identify and support the specific roles that Member States (MSs) and EU institutions take together in the making of gender equality policy.

There is a lack of consensus among scholars on the effective role of gender mainstreaming at the EU level. While some scholars take it as a “potentially radical strategy” (Mazey 2000: 342), others hold that, “the concrete impacts of gender - mainstreaming have been uneven” (Lombardo and Meier 2008: 102). While conceptually gender mainstreaming arrests the patriarchal structures and the ‘gender contract’ (Rees 1998; Stratigaki 2005), none the less, it as a strategy is weakly institutionalised and much about it remains uncertain and unpredictable (Mazey 2002; Pollack & Hafner- Burton 2000). As a matter of fact, the more the EU has expanded the dimension of gender equality policy, the more it loses the specific approach and meaning it attaches with gender equality ending up with a narrow approach towards gender equality.

Hence, the efforts of gender mainstreaming to expand the application of gender equality beyond the sphere of paid work and labour market, it co-opts with other policy interests and objectives. Bennett and Booth mention that the policy development of mainstreaming has been restricted to the too narrow economic focus of the EC (2002: 443). In a similar vein, Lombardo and Verloo (2008) - while analysing some selected EU policy documents on ‘family policies’, ‘domestic violence’ and ‘gender inequality in politics’- hold that while the EU has widened its approach to these new areas, it has not framed these issues as gender equality problems, rather led to an uneven development of their goals, diagnosis and solutions (2008: 117). They have identified the underlying reasons for this lays in the lack of a gendered understanding at the EU level as well as in the absence of a strong feminist voice in the EU official discourse and in the lack of binding provisions associated with gender mainstreaming-all of which lead to the ‘broadening-without-deepening’ approach to gender policies in the EU (ibid.: 119).

Many more diverse opinions are put forth with respect to gender mainstreaming in the EU framework. In the words of Teresa Rees (2002), gender mainstreaming in the EU corresponds to a ‘paradigm shift in thinking about gender equality’ yet ‘misappropriated and misunderstood’ (p: 11). For Lombardo and Meier, gender mainstreaming represents an ‘open signifier that can be filled with both feminist and non-feminist meanings’ (2006: 161). Hence, it acquires multiple meanings and definitions at the EU level. Stratigaki spelled out that mainstreaming turns into an ‘abstract “principle” or “empty rhetoric’ (2005:174-175). The content is still chaotic

and mainstreaming gender equality is interpreted as merely a new set of methods' (ibid.: 442). Similarly, Pollack and Hefner-Burton hold that while gender mainstreaming contains a potentially revolutionary concept that aims at incorporating a gender perspective across EU policies and it demands that all stakeholders in the policy process adopt a gender perspective; what is problematic in this regard is that, most of these actors have little experience, knowledge or interest in gender issues (2000: 434).

According to many EU thinkers, the gender mainstreaming strategy is largely influenced by both the economic concerns and social justice goals (Hantrias 2000b: 124; Pollack & Hefner Burton 2000; Rees 1998, 2000, 2002). Even after the great transformations and change that the EU faces during and after 1990s, gender equality is formulated as a wider agent of employment and economic growth within the EU (Lewis, 2006, 432-433). Therefore, it can be argued that the gender equality policy discourse at the EU level have been strategically framed into the dominant frame (Mazey, 2000) of ongoing socio-economic challenges, resulting into subsuming of fitting the gender equality goal to the dominant policy interests. Maria Stratigaki rightly confirms that inclusion of gender equality as a priority agenda has been quite feasible for the EU when it were framed in line with broader economic goals.

In this process, however, gender equality is co-opted by economic priorities and its meaning and purpose adapted accordingly (2005: 180). The following Table: 2 sums up all these different approaches to Gender equality at the EU level.

Table 2. 2: Different Approaches to Gender Equality at the EU level.

Strategy/ Paradigm	Problem Definition	Solution	Responsibility
Equal Treatment 1957-1980	Inequality in law. Women and men are not treated the same but are differently represented in and protected by law, women being worse off. Individual disadvantage.	Change the laws to secure formal equal rights for women and men.	Legislators.
Positive Action 1981-1990	Unequal starting positions for women and men. Women are disadvantaged as a group. Group disadvantage.	Specific measures to address specific problems caused by disadvantages starting positions.	Gender experts, specialist, gender equality units and agencies.
Mainstreaming 1991-Present	Gender inequality is caused by male centered systems and structures. Structural inequality: institutions and structures constitute the root of individual and group disadvantage.	Transform the Gender hierarchy by incorporating a gender perspective into all systems and structures, policies, programmes, processes and projects, and into ways of seeing and doing and into cultures and their organizations.	All actors involved in the policy-making process.

Source: Doloros Calvo, 2013

As already mentioned before, that identifying how the problem is defined in policy discourse leads to exploring the underlying objective and goals of proposed policy solutions. A close analysis of all these policy documents and texts reflect a rhetorical approach towards gender equality at the EU level. In the EU context, while referring, terms and issues are frequently discussed with respect to gender equality and gender mainstreaming across the EU policy discourse, there lacks, an explicit definition or a discussion on what it exactly means to be 'gender equality'.<sup>87</sup>

The reference around the strategy of gender mainstreaming is made extensively since it was introduced in the Commission Communication titled 'Incorporating Equal Opportunities for Women and Men into all Community Policies and Activities (COM(96)67 final)', however, the Communication did not offer any definition of gender, in spite of the fact that the document is considered to be the foundational text for the EU when it comes to gender mainstreaming. The document rather puts emphasis on the importance of both women and men in attaining gender equality and it refers to create a partnership in dealing with equality between men and women. Most of the documents reflect upon a more general objective of women's 'occupational integration' as a way to achieve gender equality. The documents project the difference principle, categorising men as the 'norm' and 'women' being a homogenous category. Apparently, there is an undertone of fundamental rights of women and girls in attaining gender equality, however, in reality the proposed actions are limited to focusing on women's employment, education and training as key to gender equality.

Moreover, understanding of gender itself as well as of gender mainstreaming and its introduction in policy areas also provide a narrow approach to gender equality. 'Gender' and 'Women' are used as synonym in most of policy documents, not only at

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<sup>87</sup> For example: the Reports on Equality between Women and Men released by the Commission every year focus mainly on the importance of taking 'gender issues' into consideration in relation to labour market questions. The 2005 Commission Report on Equality between Women and men says: 'The integration of a gender dimension into policies will contribute to attaining the overall Lisbon objectives. There is need for few initiatives to increase employment in order to meet the challenge of an ageing society, including providing adequate pensions for women and men. particular attention must be paid to mobilising the full potential of female employment and to boosting labour market participation of older women and immigrant women who have the lowest employment rates'(COM (2005) 44 final:3).

the general EU level but also within the specific policy areas. At the EU level, gender is not understood as a structure or a process of reproducing hierarchies, but a category that can be filled out by ‘male’ or ‘female’ (and only these two options); it is static, it's a thing. This is very much visible within the policy areas of social and economic policy as well. In using women or even sex as synonymous with gender’, gender is understood as a Noun (Eveline & Bacchi 2005). There is almost no discussion regarding the power relations that construct gender at the EU level.

## **2.2 Rhetoric and Reality of EU Gender policy**

There is a paradox underscoring the EU gender equality policy which can be explored by problematising the EU gender equality policy at three levels: first, the conceptual understanding of gender equality; second: Co-optation of Equality Policies (both are discussed above) and third: Ineffectiveness of gender equality measures at the ground level. This ineffectiveness of gender equality measures at the ground level in the EU is rooted in the problems mentioned above. Before bringing up this aspect of ineffectiveness, a brief look is needed at the existing gender inequality at the EU level which may provide a ground for what solutions the EU had offered to with respect to addressing such gap.

### ***2.2.1 The problem of EU gender (in) equality***

Gender inequality persists across Europe. It prevails across all levels in the EU -from the institutions to the labour market and to the family. Women continue to be outnumbered by men in all the areas of life in Europe:

“Although today 60% of new university graduates are female, women are outnumbered by men in leadership positions in the corporate sector in the EU. On average, a mere 17.8 board members of the largest publicly listed companies in the EU are women [...] there are only five countries – Finland, France, Latvia, Sweden and the Netherlands – in which women account for at least a quarter of board members” (European Commission, 2014).<sup>88</sup>

Although the EU has been monitoring over such gender gap in decision-making since 2010, the progress has been very slow. In September 2010, the European Commission published its ‘Strategy for Equality between Women and Men’ (2010-2015) focusing

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<sup>88</sup> Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender\\_balance\\_decision\\_making/131011\\_women\\_men\\_leadership\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender_balance_decision_making/131011_women_men_leadership_en.pdf)



on “targeted initiatives to improve the gender balance in decision-making” (DG Justice, 2013). Nevertheless, in reality not one EU Member State is close to the EU’s 40% objective and that more than two thirds are not even half-way to meeting it. Even in the European Commission, there has been a male dominance since 1958. The female representation since 2009 has been improved to 33% only (ibid.: 19). The scenario in the labour market is to a great extent bleak as well.

Women’s employment rate in the EU stands at 63%-that of men at 75%. While this gap between employments level shrinks over the years with an employment rate increasing from 58% in 2002 to 63% in 2008, it has been a direct consequence of financial and economic crisis which had particularly affected the male dominated sectors in the labour market (European Commission, 2014).<sup>89</sup>

Besides, women are the worst hit in the labour market due to the nature of the jobs they perform ; the part-time work they have taken up; and the social security system which have almost sidelined them in providing them with benefits. The labour market is highly segregated across gender lines with men predominantly holding positions in the skillful, leadership positions and women are mostly concentrated into the profiles of unskillful assisting jobs:

‘Almost a third of employed women work part-time, this compares to a mere 8% of men working part-time. Even though men devote more time to paid work, women work in total 60 hours a week, 10 hours more than men, spending on average 26 hours on caring activities, compared with 9 hours spent by men’ (Ibid).<sup>90</sup>

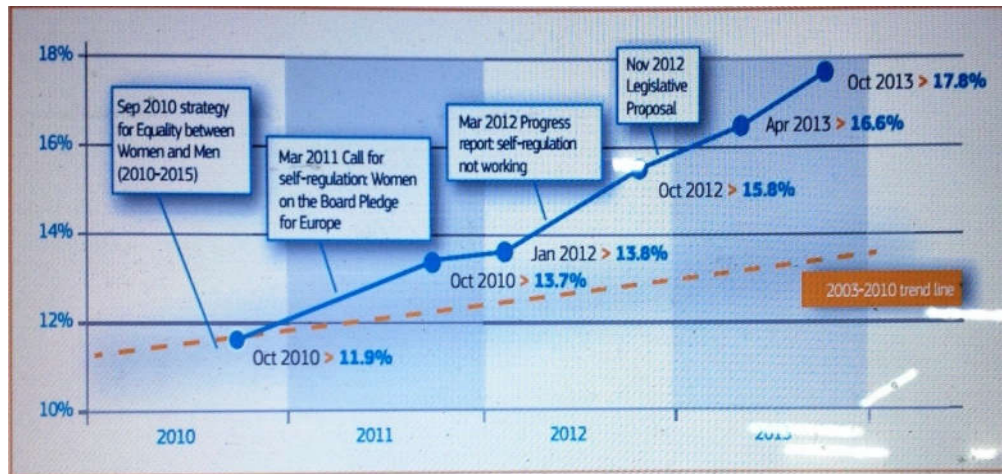
Besides, “Women are still paid on average around 16% less than men per hour of work across the entire economy (down from 17% three years ago). Women do not only face lower wages, but they are also more likely to work part-time and interrupt their careers to care for others. As a direct consequence, women receive an average 39% less in pensions than men” (Ibid.)

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<sup>89</sup> Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Employment\\_statistics#Part-time\\_and\\_fixed-term\\_contracts](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Employment_statistics#Part-time_and_fixed-term_contracts)

<sup>90</sup> ‘The proportion of women in employment working part-time in the EU-28 in 2014 in the age group of 15-64 was 32.2% compared with 8.8% for men. More than three quarters (76.7 %) of all women employed in the Netherlands worked on a part-time basis in 2014, by far the highest rate among the EU Member States followed by Austria , Germany, UK, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium and Ireland, where part-time work accounted in each case for around a quarter of those in employment. The gap also exists in terms of wages between male and their female counterpart’

Figure 2.2: The Evolution of the Proportion of Women on Boards of Large Listed Companies in the EU since 2010.



Source: European Commission, database on women and men in decision-making.

### 2.2.2 Ineffectiveness of Gender Equality Measures at the Ground Level.

With the realisation of existing gender gap in the labour market and the conflicts arising out of work-family situation, policies like ‘reconciliation of paid work and family life’ introduced many initiatives like protection of mothers in the workplace; flexible working schedule; leave arrangements; services provision etc. However, in reality these policies underpinned the ways through which women could maintain both work-family responsibilities and reflect more of a gesture towards reinforcing traditional gender roles. The following section captures some elements of this agenda which reveals a stark reality of gender hierarchy and discrimination which it implicitly proposes.

The policy on ‘Reconciliation of Paid Work and Family Life’ has been the core part of the EU social policy and has been widely intertwined with the employment of the policy as a means to tackle work-family conflicts. Reconciliation between work and family marked as major political agenda of employment policy therefore significantly influencing the EU key policy innovation of the late 1990s. New action programmes were designed to put emphasis on reconciliation. For example: the third action programme stated that one of its key objective was reconciliation, the implementation of which was intended to reduce the barriers to access to and participation in the labour market by women. Following such commitments, the EU had formulated four

important legislative measures namely ‘the Recommendation on Child care; the Pregnancy and Maternity Directive; the Parental leave Directive and the Part-time Workers Directive’. However, all these initiatives were problematic, with respect to ensuring gender equality because the EU’s preoccupation was more likely to focus on women’s access to the labour markets. Reconciliation is promoted as part of removal of obstacles to access to the labour market and hence promoted for child care services’ (McGlynn: 2001).

The concept of “reconciling work and family” was introduced to bring gender equality and therefore it facilitated equal opportunities for women in the labor market, however, it has consequently shifted with economic priorities and with different implications. The problem was with the way reconciliation and sharing was used interchangeably by policy makers. According to Maria Stratigaki (2004):

‘Sharing’ as a term relates to equality of women and men, defining a policy objective in the area of gender relations, whereas “reconciliation” is derived from labor market analysis and has a more economic orientation. While the notion of sharing implies challenging the gendered division of labor at home particularly the care work carried out by women and men in the family, the reconciliation policies seeks to reproduce and consolidate women’s roles and responsibilities as primary care givers’ (p. 30-56).

Therefore, instead of projecting the original goal of gender equality within the framework of employment policy (through redistribution of household and unpaid caring work between women and men), ‘reconciliation’ has been made ambiguous to compete with the growing need for creation of employment, resulting into losing out such potential of changing gender relations and gendered division of work within family. For Stratigaki, although “reconciliation reformulated to mean improving women’s ability to combine paid work and family work in their own lives, eventually became an integral part of the EU employment policy in the late 1990s, but reconciliation now served the goal of legitimating more flexible work conditions rather than changing gender relations within the family”(ibid.).

One such evidence is reflected in the adoption of the pregnancy and maternity directive. Though it apparently brought enormous improvements in the rights of pregnant women in many member states, it was not meant for transforming gender relations but to reproduce traditional approaches to pregnancy and parenting:

“As Melissa Benn has argued ‘while maternity leave is essential, it is not complemented by changes in the role of men, it cements women’s relationship to the home. The directive on parental leave proved rhetorical as it was granted three months leave period to mothers and fathers, with no provision for pay. Therefore although the directive provided that the rights should be in principle, non-transferable between parents, the lack of remuneration hindered the take up of leave’”(McGlynn, 2001).

Not many men were convinced that they should use such leave arrangement for care work; so they mostly use it for vacation around. Moreover, it was also practically impossible for the highest earner in the family- which in most cases is men- to cut off his salary on such leave and the reason lies in the existing male breadwinner family which still is prevalent in many countries in Europe in which women are usually encouraged and expected to take up such leave. The situation is different in the Nordic countries where dual earner model is the norm and men are encouraged to take up parental leave (paid and non-transferable). This has been made supportive with the individual tax system which allows for wider base of earning, thus making it affordable for both the partners to take up leave. This led to bring not only economic independence for majority of women, but also helped to continue with their care work and housing responsibilities.

Women at the EU level, continue to bear major share of family and domestic responsibilities including care work, despite their increased participation in the labour market. The EU policy texts seem to have denied the element of ‘agency’<sup>91</sup> in analysing women’s position in gender equality framework. It rather defined women as passive recipients of policies or as objects of policies. Their relative absence from policy proposals as active agents, reflects the effects of problem representations and the subject positions constructed through policy discourses (Bachhi 2009: 15; Risman 2004: 437)<sup>92</sup>. In this regard it can be said that at the EU level, the target of policies is women and this target includes women in the labour market who find themselves in a disadvantageous position compared to men. And women in the informal sector are also the target and both these groups are defined either as ‘potential’ or ‘wasted’

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<sup>91</sup> Agency refers to the way women are seen as active agents for change or having their own perspective. For example, the 2005 Report on Equality between Women and Men states that, ‘Europe needs to mobilise people to enter the labour market and to create policies to further promote women’s employment (...) and to fully utilise the female employment (COM (2005)44 final: 6. Here the women’s agency is being left out and what emphasised is the instrumentality of women’s employment which holds advantageous for the market economy.

<sup>92</sup> Discussed in Chapter 1

resources of the economy (Calvo, 2013: 98). Hence, without substantial changes in the unequal gender relations in the family; in the caring and household work, women's labour market entry simply adds to women's existing responsibilities, leading to a double shift in women's lives. A genuine gender concern thus evades most of these social and economic policies in most of the European countries and has been undermined by shifting the meaning of the original concepts to fit into the prevailing political and economic priorities in the European Union.

### **2.3 Gender Equality: The Fundamental Value in Swedish Policy Discourse**

In the official document titled Fact Sheet: The Swedish Government's Gender Equality Policy (2009) contains two principal aims for Swedish gender equality:

'(i) to combat and transform systems that preserve the gender-based distribution of power and resources in society and (ii) to ensure that women and men enjoy the same power and opportunities to shape their own lives'. The document further states that "when they share power and influence in all aspects of community life, the result is a more fair and democratic society'.

The document also contains sub-goals of Swedish gender equality policy that intends

'to ensure equal distribution of power and influence in which women and men shall have the same rights and opportunities to be active citizens and to shape the conditions for decision making. In matters of economic equality, women and men shall have same opportunities and conditions with regard to education and paid work leading them to have lifelong economic independence' (Ibid.).

In addition to economic independence, it ensures equal distribution of unpaid care and household work which means that women and men shall take the same responsibility for household work and have the same opportunities to give and receive care on equal terms. Finally the document stresses upon ending men's violence against women. What features as a unique element in this official document is the concept of power structure which is sought to be deconstructed through various policy objectives.

The overall objective of Swedish gender equality policy is therefore to guarantee that men and women shall have the same rights, responsibilities and choices with respect to having equal power resources, ability and opportunity to shape the society and their own lives in both private and public life.

The political understanding of Swedish gender equality is rooted in the principle that “the achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society, in which they work in equality and complementarities, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences.”<sup>93</sup> This understanding gained more acceptance, ever since women, and especially feminist politicians, have brought into political spheres issues that used to be seen as ‘private’ and ‘women’s problems’ only. Examples are childcare, paid parental leave from work, and violence against women. This leads to the shaping of commitments of the Swedish welfare state which therefore materialises it through various policy initiatives. The commitment for the expansive public and subsidized child care, the social security for all the citizens, the leave arrangements, changes in the tax legislation from family based system towards more of an individualised one, the family and labour market policies-all reflect upon this ideology of gender equal society.

At the political level, the ‘passion for equality’ was met with a certain success when during the 1970s and 1980s, women were integrated into labour market and corresponding policies were taken up to strengthen and speeded up the process of women’s access to the public sphere. The dominant political group social democratic party was mostly driven by the ideology of redistribution policies,<sup>94</sup> and therefore they took up various initiatives that are directed to share resources equally among all its citizens equally, therefore alleviating the class differences. The efforts were made to do away with public-private split and to renegotiate the gender relations vis a vis public private boundary.

The Swedish gender equality discourse holds it significant to engage men into gender equality efforts. As the Minister of Gender equality Åsa Tegnér recently expresses, ‘to date, gender equality has typically been driven by women. However, in recent years, the role of men and boys in advancing gender equality has received increasing

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<sup>93</sup> See at <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/democracy.pdf>.

<sup>94</sup> The underlying theoretical, political and normative assumptions about gender equality and social justice in Sweden are related to the idea of redistribution, recognition and representation. Redistribution in the way public-private split has lost some of its gendered meanings in Scandinavia and the gender relations vis a vis public private boundary has been re-articulated and renegotiated.

attention, both globally and in Sweden. The involvement of men and boys is an important part of the Swedish government's gender equality strategy, as demonstrated by UN's 'HeForShe campaign.'<sup>95</sup>

There are many feminist thinkers who sought to explore the embedded gender system in Sweden and spelled out the need for deconstructing it with a new gender equality discourse in Sweden. Yvonne Hirdman (1990 ) was among those initial sociologists who theorises the Swedish gender system and came up with the 'gender contract theory'. For her gender system should not be read as if it is functional, deterministic box operating in society, but rather as two consistent patterns (clearly distinguishable historically as well as geographically). She points out that, each society seeks to create and maintain a gender system where men and women are assigned with different gender roles and positions, which is further based on the idea of separation and hierarchy. This separation is reflected the way men and women work in separate spheres in society horizontally and vertically and find their tasks opposed and binding to each other.<sup>96</sup> Very often the segregation and hierarchy leads to 'gender conflict'. Furthermore, masculine activities are considered more valuable along with their earning capacity, exerting power and thus all these become a norm while women remain an exclusive to this category and thus seen as 'other. For Hirdman, these gender patterns are reinstated and upheld by both the gender and is maintained at the personal and structural level by everyday actions. This structure seeks to limit men's and women's power to make free choices. Hence, she proposed the need to break this pattern through the institutional practices like public policies. Swedish welfare policies are formulated to deconstruct this gender system. The basic model which frequently used in Swedish policymaking is undoing the theory of gender system which is fed with the idea of 'gender contract.'<sup>97</sup> This gender contract focuses more on the gender system as gender creating process rather considering it as structurally

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<sup>95</sup> On 18 June, the United Nations global HeForShe campaign for gender equality was launched in Sweden. The objective is to show that gender equality is not a women's issue, but an issue for women and men alike. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven's message was that more men need to take a stand for gender equality and that he will personally take the lead and implement a broad agenda for greater gender equality in Sweden. For more details see <http://www.government.se/articles/2015/06/heforshe-launched-in-sweden/>

<sup>96</sup> Labour market segregation is one such example where women and men have specified and segregated jobs and in different sectors – professions like engineering, medical, business, technology are typified as masculine job and considered skilled ones as against caring professions, nurse, teachers which seen as the domain of women's world and are considered unskilled as well.

<sup>97</sup> The Genus System Theory was developed by Yvonne Hirdman in an official report in 1990, SOU, 1990: 44 and is further elaborated in Hirdman 2003.

intact. It constantly negotiated on new emerging roles of women in modern society and implicitly those of men as well. It therefore “‘deconstruct’ the subtext of gender within various political reforms, norms, statements and not only those about women, but also the so-called gender neutral laws and reforms where ‘man’ is the self – evident leading character” (Hirdman 1998: 37). The social and economic policies in Sweden are driven with the idea to deconstruct the notion of gendered categories by altering the traditional gender role behaviour by involving men in traditionally assigned gender roles for women, i.e. care work and household responsibilities. Encouraging and promoting sharing responsibility for men in such manner invites for a new discourse on gender equality which creates a new notion of masculinity which defined men more as ‘participatory’ parent and father.<sup>98</sup>

Besides, Hirdman, Norwegian political scientist Helga Hernes (1987) also argues that Sweden is a ‘women-friendly state’,<sup>99</sup> as it ensures not only the social citizenship rights but also participatory citizenship rights and women’s agency in policy-making:

“A woman-friendly state would not force harder choices on woman than on men, or permit unjust treatment on the basis of sex. In a woman-friendly state, women will continue to have children, yet there will also be other roads to self-realization open to them. In such a state women will not have to choose futures that demand greater sacrifices from them than are expected of men” (ibid.: 15).

Hernes’ conceptual framework is fed with a grand vision of gender equality which is based on the idea that women’s integration in politics and breadwinning will bring gender equality (focused on women’s agency in policy-making). Swedish feminist thinker Barbara Hobson similarly casts Sweden as women-friendly society with policies that enable women to combine employment with having and caring for families.

Nancy Fraser unlike her predecessors, theorises Swedish welfare state as a ‘universal caregiver model’, which aims at removing gendered segregation by making women’s life patterns the norm for both women and men. Her approach is based on the principles of ‘shared parental role-playing’ with respect to care and breadwinning.

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<sup>98</sup> See for more details at <http://www.includegender.org/facts/gender-systems/>

<sup>99</sup> Hernes’s theory about woman-friendliness and state feminism primarily constructs redistribution as an instrument for obtaining social justice. Inspired by the emphasis on universal social rights in Scandinavia, she theorises the link between social equality, women’s political mobilisation and equal representation in democracy. The strength of Hernes’ is the conceptualisation of the interdependence of woman’s different roles as workers, mother caregivers and citizens.



Fraser claims that the model has the potential to foster gender equality in the post-industrial phase of capitalism, where women are being integrated into breadwinning, and the collapse in male wages diminishes the viability of the male breadwinner norm. She prefers the Swedish model most suitable as it is the only one that adequately manages postindustrial dilemmas<sup>100</sup> (Borchorst, 2008: 5).

In accordance with the existing literature, this research holds that Sweden is more inclined towards gender-equality friendly policies<sup>101</sup> unlike the women-friendly ones, as it focuses on both the gender rather than women only and put in place the perspective of both gender in all policy areas. Gender-equality friendly policy in Sweden seeks to deconstruct the traditional gender roles for both men and women and provides institutional mechanisms to simultaneously encourage women's labour market participation and men's care work. This brings transformations in the attitude towards gender equality at the wider social level. Unlike most welfare states which encourage care obligation as typical women's job<sup>102</sup>, Sweden ensures resources, rights and benefits to be shared equally among both the genders. This not only affects the material situation but also impact women and men's decision to seek employment or choices over household and caring responsibility. The Swedish welfare state policies therefore, seek to "shape gender relations; structure political conflict and participation; and contributes to the formation and mobilization of specific gendered identities and interests (Hernes 1987; Gordon 1988; Piven 1985; Orloff 1993).

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<sup>100</sup> 'Fraser's first ideal type, the universal breadwinner model aims at universalising the breadwinner role and emphasizes gender-sameness. It intends to turn women into citizen workers like men by, among other things, moving care work from the family into market and the state. The second ideal type, the caregiver parity model, keeps care work into the family context and seeks to reevaluate informal care work through public assistance, such as care-giver allowance. it preserves the gendered division of caregiving and breadwinning, but seeks to make gender differences costless and to upgrade women to the status of citizen caregivers. Fraser's third ideal type that is universal caregiver model combines the best part of these two other model types which is able to dismantle the gendered opposition between care and breadwinning altogether'--for more details see Borchorst, A. (2008),

<sup>101</sup> Gender-equality policies are being perceived here as part of wider social policy, as it intersect and converge with various categories of gender in society as well as deal with other social policy area like family policies, taxation policies and labour market policies.

<sup>102</sup> Unlike in Sweden, it is not required by law in Germany that men should take up parental leave. The male breadwinner model is still present in Germany and German social security system unlike Sweden provides various financial incentives such as the new care allowance ("*Betreuungsgeld*") for mothers to stay at home with their child instead of (re)entering the labour market ( See Botsch & Maier, 2009).

## 2.4 Gender Mainstreaming in Swedish Policy Discourse

“Sweden has given gender mainstreaming a high priority on the political agenda (Ministry for Industry, Employment and Communications [MIEC], 2001a) as a way to bring about a more coherent approach to the project of gender equality.”<sup>103</sup> While there are variations with respect to conceptualising the concept, there is relatively an agreement about its aim. In case of Sweden, gender mainstreaming is defined “as a long-term strategy or systematic institutional approach for promoting/producing gender equality as a policy outcome” (Maitrayee 2004: 66). The concept is largely defined in the Swedish policy discourse as rights-based frameworks of equality. It encapsulates the idea of gender mainstreaming as a process of objectification in which virtues of behaviour is demonstrated through ritualistic use of ‘gender analysis’ as a tool in pursuit of goal of gender equality. Sweden has mandated to reflect upon a strong gender equality perspective which needs to be incorporated into all its policy areas and programmes. It also introduces ‘gender training’ course for building awareness for gender equality.

The gender equality process in Sweden has been an outcome of feminist activism and its engagement with both the state and the female electorate over an extended period of time. It has been driven by internal process, less subject to political pressures from above or contradictory external pressures. It moreover, lends itself to being institutionalised as an integral part of the Swedish way of life. There is a general political consensus in Sweden on the principles of gender equality. It is not a particularly divisive issue for competing political parties. On the contrary, it is rather unpopular to exclude gender issues from political commitments in Sweden.

The policy discourse on gender mainstreaming in Sweden is therefore driven by the idea of institutionalising gender equality by imbibing gender-sensitive practices and norms in the structures, processes, and environment of public policy. Since the 1990s, “Gender Mainstreaming is a core aspect of gender equality policies in the country where the main idea of the political actors is that men and women shall have the same rights, opportunities, duties and responsibilities in all parts of society (Jalmert, 2004).”<sup>104</sup> This is reflected in the way Sweden has integrated men into strategy's

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<sup>103</sup> Cited in Kabeer et.al, p.219

<sup>104</sup> *Supra note* 19 at 15.

implementation. What makes Swedish gender mainstreaming relatively unique is its emphasis on women's access to paid work and simultaneously arresting the need for men's caring work. Therefore, the understanding of gender equality is found in not only making women economically independent but also making men involved in caring tasks. This lessens the burden of women's obligation to caring tasks and all. This also helped in revisiting men's position in the family and society. Swedish society therefore perceives women's emancipation to be achieved by policy measures aiming at both women and men.

The legal and political appearance of gender mainstreaming in Sweden took place in 1994 much after several measures and steps were taken towards achieving gender equality during 1970s and 1980s. While the EU had officially adapted Gender Mainstreaming in the context of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995, Sweden had already introduced it one year earlier: In 1994, the bill "Shared power, shared responsibility" (*delad makt, delat ansvar*, Government bill 1993/94: 147) was brought before the parliament" (EIGE, 2015). As Gender Mainstreaming is first mentioned in this bill, it serves as the Government's main strategy to achieve gender equality since then (*ibid.*). The annual statement of Swedish government policy also stated that a gender equality perspective needs to be reflected in all the decisions taken by the Cabinet. All ministers should be committed to promote gender equality within their respective area of responsibilities and make a gender impact analysis. In the same year, Swedish government also mandates to set up government committees of inquiry that would analyse and discuss their proposals from a gender perspective for all policy areas and would assess to what extent gender impact - brings proposed changes in the labour market, in the economy, in the welfare system, in education, etc. Besides, organisational and budgetary matters are also set up for having a gender inclusive perspective. From 1994, the Swedish government instructed that all statistics in Sweden must be disaggregated by sex (Statistics Sweden, 2014).

Although gender mainstreaming has been well received in the political discourse and the terms and its meaning were much acknowledged, it was sought to be replaced with a Swedish word so that people can understand and relate and which can legitimise the ways of aim of achieving gender equality. Hence,

“*jämställdhetsintegrering*” was created (Pettersson, 2004a, p.26).<sup>105</sup> This worked positively for Sweden to integrate Gender Mainstreaming into society without problems of understanding. Besides its own phrasing, Sweden was the country in Europe to first and most consequently bring Gender Mainstreaming into the political and administrative reality (ibid.).

In Sweden, a great deal of attention has been paid to the issue of management while dealing with gender mainstreaming and in order to bring changes within organisation, and inculcate new values, new dimensions are at place: intension, knowledge and supportive structures. Moreover, efforts are also taken up to develop methods for the systematic review and analysis of the influence of women and men in particular operations. One of the most widely used is the “3R method” which focuses on issues of representation, resources and rights and has primarily been used by local authorities to review and analyse the distribution of power from a gender perspective, the role of gender in the organisation and gender standards within different municipal activities (Kabeer et. al 2008: 220).

‘In a report prepared by gender-mainstreaming support (JämStöd),<sup>106</sup> a model on gender mainstreaming is outlined along with its various steps that are to be followed in the gender mainstreaming process in order to have a lasting impact on the operation undertaken. The model is defined as ‘*procedure for sustainable gender mainstreaming, or the Ladder*’. The ladder contains eight steps. In its first step, a conceptual understanding of gender equality is being taken up. The committee gives a brief overview of Swedish gender equality policy to the target group. Second step decides over the condition for gender mainstreaming which is decided through three methods<sup>107</sup>: *study the operation, the gender-equal operation and examine the process.*

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<sup>105</sup> “Directly translated, the term means ‘equality integration’. In Sweden, it is used synonymously with the term “Gender Mainstreaming” (Supra note 19 at 21)

<sup>106</sup> It is a Swedish committee of inquiry set up by the Swedish government to provide information about gender mainstreaming and to develop practical methods and models for mainstreaming gender into central government activities.

<sup>107</sup> The methods vary in their degree of difficulty: some are simple and easily implemented without any special prior knowledge, while others demand more in-depth skills in method guidance as well as knowledge of gender issues and Swedish gender equality policy. Some of the methods use broad brushstrokes and involve an inventory of the entire operation, while some delve more deeply into a particular issue or activity. In methods involving gender equality analysis, the participants themselves usually carry out the analyses with the help of a skilled supervisor. If the result is to be meaningful, the supervisor must be well acquainted with gender issues and Swedish gender equality policy. Whatever method is to be used, participants should be equipped with a basic awareness of gender issues beforehand if the work is to be meaningful and rewarding.

It is followed by third step that contains a working model, the checklist for planning and organising development work, known as ‘METS’- this tool is useful for management group who undertakes the task of organising gender mainstreaming work, and therefore provides an overview of what organisation of the work requires. Steps four to six consist of JämKAS Basic, JämKAS Plus, Process Mapping and JämKART methods: these are meant for surveying, analysis, formulating the objective from a gender perspective. The seventh step details about how the organisation is expected to implement the methods and measures framed throughout in previous steps. The eighth and final step is JämUR method helps in evaluating the outcome from a gender perspective’ (SOU 2007:15: 6-7).<sup>108</sup>

The following chapter explores how the Swedish gender equality policy along with Swedish welfare commitments have been able to incorporate gender perspective into various social and economic policies, thereby creating a favourable environment for gender mainstreaming to flourish.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The chapter looked into how ‘gender (in) equality’ has been represented as a ‘problem’ area in the policy discourse at the level of the EU and Sweden. Following Bacchi’s analysis to policy discourse, the chapter explores the significance of defining gender inequality as a problem area in the EU and in Sweden. At the EU level, discourse of gender equality is influenced by women’s economic independence in labour market only. Therefore, representation of ‘gender inequality’ as a problem area found its validity in women’s lack of participation in the labour market. The corresponding policy solutions therefore are limited to offering supplementary benefits like part-time job, flexible shift in paid work, or maternity paid leave etc. The prime objective of gender mainstreaming which is transforming gender relations with family did not take place at the EU level. Therefore the narrow definition of gender inequality weakens the success of gender mainstreaming at the EU level.

However, Swedish policy discourse problematises gender inequality as rooted in gender based distribution of power and resources between men and women in society. Therefore, the Swedish gender equality policy finds solution in combating and

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<sup>108</sup> See Swedish Government Official Reports, SOU 2007: 15, p.6-12.

transforming rooted gender structure and ensures that women and men enjoy the same power and opportunities to shape their own lives. The chapter substantiates that gender-equality friendly policy in Sweden seeks to deconstruct the traditional gender roles for both men and women and provides institutional mechanisms to simultaneously encourage women's labour market participation and men's care work. This brings transformations in the attitude towards gender equality at the wider social level. The chapter therefore explores that the policy discourse on gender mainstreaming in Sweden is driven by the idea of institutionalizing gender equality by imbuing gender-sensitive practices and norms in the structures, processes, and environment of public policy.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Gender Equality, Socio-economic Policies and Gender-Mainstreaming in Sweden**

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Having discussed how problem representation in policy making leads to framing solutions for the defined problems, this chapter contextualizes the wider view/aspects of the socio-economic policy<sup>109</sup> instruments in Sweden and discussed the ways these policy instruments are fed with gender equality perspective. The chapter also discusses how the Swedish welfare state deals with gender mainstreaming strategy through such policy instruments. This chapter further takes us through theorizing Swedish welfare state and its embedded gender ideology in the process of exploring the background together of which led to the embellishment of a radical gender equality policy and its incorporation with the values of gender mainstreaming.

The chapter looks into the socio-economic policy initiatives, namely parental leave, public child care, individual taxation, along with some labour market initiatives in order to understand to what extent all such policy initiatives are set to reduce gender inequality and what have been the effects of such policy initiatives on gender relations within the family and in the labour market. As gender-mainstreaming is broadly acknowledged as a strategy to achieve gender equality, these policies are explored in order to understand if they contain the thematic values of gender mainstreaming while being implemented broadly. However, if all the social and economic policies are considered and analysed then study would go beyond the scope of this research. Therefore, this study only focuses on the socio-economic policies like the family and labour market policies combined with the reconciliation policies. Although various other policy areas like education, health care etc. is a part of the wider framework of welfare social policies; discussion on them is beyond the scope of this study.

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<sup>109</sup> The concept of social policy used for this research is wide in the sense that it incorporates family policy and its various aspects as well. The conditions for family life and family welfare are linked to variety of changes taken place in working life and labour market; housing and policy change in economic condition; demographic change and changes in policy principles such as the increased emphasis on private solutions for the provision of public services.

### 3.1 Socio-Economic Policies and Welfare Regimes<sup>110</sup>

Differences over various welfare regimes significantly form the essence of comparative literature of European social policy and are discussed thoroughly as a recurring theme. This can be reflected in the way European Union consists of unique yet diverse collections of welfare states as well as wide range of variations in their respective socio economic policies. In the exploration of varied nature of welfare regimes, Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare regimes became a starting point which further has helped in exploring and analysing the nature of these welfare state regimes and their respective socio-economic policies as well as their implications. In Andersen's typology of welfare regimes three welfare regimes were broadly identified as: (i) the liberal (ii) the corporatist and (iii) the social-democratic regime. What forms the core part of this regime analysis is the concept of 'de-familialisation'<sup>111</sup> which according to Esping-Andersen, determines the functional behaviour of each regime. In the context of this research, what made this typology relevant is his presumption that 'welfare regimes differ in the way cultural ideas concerning motherhood and fatherhood are incorporated into their existing social policies' (Kremer, 2005; Sainsbury, 1996). Therefore degree of participation of men and women in all fields of society –including care at home, may depend on the extent to which welfare regime allows its traditional gender roles to be altered and transformed through its policy discourse. Some welfare states show a great deal of gender equality in the division of paid and domestic work whereas other welfare states support familial traditions to be intact reflecting less supportive policies for work/care combination.

There are number of social policy instruments that distinguish welfare regimes with respect to their variations in addressing equality in the work-family situations. Some such policies are taxation policies<sup>112</sup> public childcare facilities,<sup>113</sup> leave

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<sup>110</sup> "The term 'regime' refers to the typical ways in which the provision of welfare is allocated between the state, market and family" (Esping-Andersen, 1990; 1999).

<sup>111</sup> The welfare regime proposed by him met with lot of criticism on the ground that it was applied in particular to North West Europe and also it gives less attention to the role of family, gender and non-paid activities in welfare states. However, responding to this critique, Esping-Andersen in 1999, coined the term 'de-familialisation' - which refers to the way welfare state and market provisions do not burden the family in receiving the welfare benefits. It is attributed to those welfare state regimes that promote for public work-family policies including public child care and statutory leave arrangements.

<sup>112</sup> Taxation policies in the European welfare regimes usually have a joint taxation system rather than individual taxation system which supports the single-earner model. Within Europe, only Finland, Sweden, Greece and Hungary, follow the individual taxation system. On the other hand, countries like



arrangements,<sup>114</sup> the availability of part-time arrangements and other flexible working arrangements (OECD, 2001b; Den Dulk, Doorne-Huiskes & Peper 2005; Jaumotte, 2004; Plantenga & Remery, 2005).<sup>115</sup> However, all the welfare regimes differ in terms of formulating all these social policy instruments in their way to achieve gender equality.

Following the typology proposed by Esping Andersen (1990, 1999), along with Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001, there can be five types of welfare regimes namely- (i) the liberal regime<sup>116</sup>, (ii) the conservative corporatist regime<sup>117</sup>, (iii) the Mediterranean regime<sup>118</sup> (iv) the social democratic welfare state regime<sup>119</sup> and (v) the Post-Communist regime.<sup>120</sup>

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the Czech Republic, Iceland and Ireland have a very high relative tax burden for the second earners making it less attractive for a second earner to remain in employment (Jaumotte, 2004).

<sup>113</sup> In reiterating the importance of public childcare in stimulating women's economic growth, the EU put forth various recommendations and targets related to child care for all the member states. To this direction, the Barcelona Summit in 2002 set the target for 2010 which was suggested to be achieved by the member states: "According to Barcelona Summit recommendations, member states should provide public childcare to at least 90 per cent of children between three and the mandatory school age, and to at least 33 per cent of children under three years of age. By 2003, only six countries had reached the target for the under three categories: Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, France, Sweden and the Netherlands. Ten countries had reached or were close to the Barcelona target for children between three and the mandatory school age and these are: Sweden, Denmark, Norway, southern European countries like Spain and Italy, and France, Belgium, Iceland and the Netherlands" (See Crompton et. al. 2007).

<sup>114</sup> Leave arrangements are designed to combine paid work and care work. Maternity and parental leave for working parents are mostly present in all the European countries which worked as a great motivation for both parents to continue their paid and caring children. Parental leave directive in the EU stipulated for a minimum of three months parental leave for each parent with a child less than eight years of age. However, the length or duration of parental leave varies across the EU. Countries, such as the UK, the Netherlands and Spain offer minimum provisions stipulated by the EU. However, Nordic countries offer much longer and generous paid parental leave schemes. In case of Germany and France, the parental leave is longer but income compensation is much lower than Nordic countries.

<sup>115</sup> Cited in Crompton et. al (eds.) 2007.

<sup>116</sup> The Liberal welfare state is based on idea of market dominance and private provision. Under this system, the state interferes to the extent of eliminating poverty and ensures only the basic needs of its citizens based on a means-tested basis.

<sup>117</sup> Conservative corporate welfare states are based on the principle of subsidiarity and the dominance of social insurance schemes, offering a medium level of de-commodification and a high degree of social stratification. Under this system, family gains more importance and social policy is not directed towards individual progress but collective ones. Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, France and Belgium represent this type of welfare state regime. The leave arrangements, the child care are less generous and much higher respectively in relation to other welfare regimes.

<sup>118</sup> Southern European countries fall in the Mediterranean regime facilitating fewer public provisions. It does not encourage the breadwinner family model with tax disincentives to women's paid employment like other conservative countries like Austria, Germany and the Netherlands.

<sup>119</sup> The social democratic regime is based on the idea of balanced matrix of state-market-family relations. It represents an elaborate system of public work/family policies, universal social security system, individualised tax system, substantial public child care etc. Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland come closest to this welfare state regime.

<sup>120</sup> The post-communist regime tends to support paid work and caring responsibilities through its public policies. Under this system, women are highly encouraged to participate in the labour market and the

Sweden along with other Nordic countries like Norway, Denmark and Finland, has often been considered as social democratic welfare regimes. Sweden in particular has been aligned with most of the characteristics that this welfare regime holds and has been active in using most of the social policy instruments namely the public day care system, individualized taxation system, and generous parental leave arrangements in order to bring greater gender equality in all spheres of life. In fact, Sweden was the first country in Europe to introduce parental leave for both mothers and fathers. Another important element that brings Sweden so close to this regime is the *de facto gender equality* that this country has been striving for since its inception. For Esping-Andersen (1990), the Swedish social policy is the most developed example of a social Democratic welfare state in that it successfully maintains a balance between individual independence and public responsibility.

### ***3.1.2 Swedish Welfare State ideology:***

In the analyses of the above mentioned socio-economic policy instruments, the inherent relation between the Swedish welfare state, its policy discourse and its commitments towards gender equality is of utmost importance. This helps in understanding why the Swedish socio-economic policies are largely fed with a strong gender equality perspective and are directed to achieve the same.

This socio-political context along with the state ideology combined with elements of state feminism<sup>121</sup> set the ground for a strong commitment towards gender equality and further led to establish a gender friendly paradise in Sweden. Along with its Nordic

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family is based on male-female earner model. However, gender equality at home with respect to equal division of housework and caring responsibility between men and women were not given much priority.

<sup>121</sup> Hernes defines state feminism as ‘feminism from above’ which takes place in form of ensuring gender equality and social policies and the feminisation of welfare state in relevant professions. Feminisation from below is done through mobilising women in political and cultural activities (Hernes, 1987: 153). The relationship between feminism from above and feminism from below is aptly visible in Sweden as Sweden witnessed a remarkable increase in women’s representation and participation in politics and it had remarkable influence of women within political parties too. Women in Scandinavia are to a greater extent involve in social activism, in political representation and in gender equality machinery as is reflected from feminist movement during 1990s and the gradual strengthening of state feminism. The women activism contributed to a large extent in the making of national gender equality plan in Sweden.

counterparts, Sweden shifted away from ‘maternalist’ policy model<sup>122</sup> towards a model of ‘employment for all’, thus making the ‘housewifery-that is the full time, lifelong devotion of women to caring and household functions-extinct within the Nordic states’. Sweden embraced what is called differently as ‘dual earner’ or ‘citizen-worker-carer’ or ‘adult worker’<sup>123</sup> model. The model accommodated the need for gender role transformation in the society. It supported women especially mother’s employment to which other states wishing to enhance women’s work and gender equality should aspire (Borchorst and Siim 2002; Hernes 1987).

The process of social engineering became stronger with all these initiatives. As a result not only women negotiated with their traditional gendered role and entered the public space, the men also re-negotiated various narratives of private-public space, the notion of masculinity etc. giving way to a new discourse which projects men not only as a protector or primary earner of the family but as a ‘caring man’. Among the most significant policies under this reformation phase were the low-cost quality public child care, paid parental leave, flexible working hours, part-time employment rules, individualized taxation etc. These policy initiatives proved to be setting up the cornerstone of gender equality in Sweden. It is viewed as important steps towards realising substantive equality and democracy and also as part of a wider social emancipation for both women and men by way of renegotiating on gender role relations as in one hand- bringing women more in the public space, making them financially independent and at the same time engaging men to enter the traditional realms of women, sharing the household work and careing for children, thereby developing a more care-oriented masculinity (Palme 1972; Klinth 2008).

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<sup>122</sup> Under which mothers are expected to stay home and engage in full-time caring and housework. This model has been on a decline for a number of reasons. The foremost being-the notion of sharply distinguished activities for men and women-breadwinning and care giving respectively-and is thus challenged thoroughly by feminist thinkers.

<sup>123</sup> Originally coined by Jane Lewis 2001. ‘Adult worker family’ model means that provision of material support is publicly expected (through tax rules and regulations of social benefits) by adult family members and that each partner is responsible for maintenance of themselves and members of the family with two generations, regardless of marriage or sex.

### *3.1.3 Negotiating Gendered roles through Policies*

Unlike other welfare regimes, eliminating gender division of labour in the family marks a central element of Swedish welfare state policies as this gender division of work is considered being responsible for extended gender stratification in society. Some Swedish feminists thinkers argued that such division of labour not only reinforces unequal distribution of tasks between men and women but also involves the reproduction and maintenance of gender itself (Berk 1985; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Others have considered that such unequal division of work may lead to hinder women's economic and political independence and impact their social benefits as well. For example, according to Barbara Hobson (1990):

"gendered allocation of time between paid and unpaid work can have consequences for married women's economic well-being throughout the life course. Social benefits, such as disability compensation, health care and parental leave are often given only to those who are in the labour force [...] pension systems, for instance, are usually built around worker status and wage contribution" (1990: 236).

For many social scientists, the economic dependency of women frequently leads to poverty and reduce their standard of living once the cordial relationship is broken. Some studies therefore show a great deal of economic cost that women face due to divorce (Weitzman 1985; Eckelaar and MacLean 1986; Millar 1988). In Scandinavian countries although social benefits are generous, single mothers usually be more on social assistance than mothers in couples (Gustafsson 1987).

Family, in Sweden is therefore considered as a bargaining unit where all the decisions regarding finance, time allocation for household and caring tasks as well as long term decisions regarding education and career between both gender decided through negotiations. The acceptance of family being an unit of individuals who often have different goals and expectations and compete for resources (both time and money), may help to a large extent influence the bargaining power of the individuals and bring into question the power and dependency ratio between men and women (Hobson, 1990: 237). Feminist theorists also recognise that men's power over women operates at both macro and the micro level, and that the process at both levels underlie the

reproduction of gender stratification and therefore, changing the distribution of labour in the household may be not only bring changes in individual attributes, but also on changes in societal attributes (Janeen, 1997). The state policy instruments may trigger that change in the way towards egalitarian gender relations at the individual level by way of balancing gendered division of labour between men and women which can bring further changes at the level of wider society.<sup>124</sup>

Unlike other European countries, Sweden did not limit itself to the objective of achieving gender equality only by bringing gender parity in the labour market, it sought to bring substantial changes in the socio-cultural 'gender framework' that reinforces and validates the normative behaviour of gender relations and develops the wider inequality. To this end Sweden made a shift beyond the labour market into the 'family'-an essential unit in society that can negotiate on gender relations and also possesses a great strength to transform such embedded gender inequality at large scale.

While there are still existing gaps in the Swedish family in terms of gender role relations, the situation is improving remarkable over the period. Women in contemporary Sweden spend less time on household chores than they did 10 years ago, whereas men are increasingly participating in household responsibilities more as compared to a decade ago. Statistics Sweden in its 'time use study' finds out:

“Women, now, do 14 minutes less unpaid household work per day, compared to ten years ago. Meanwhile men on average do 11 minutes more unpaid household work. And if you look further back, women spend significantly less time doing household work today compared to 20 years ago. In 1990, women did 5 hours of household work per day, now they spend on average 4 hours daily doing so. Despite the improvements, women still do more than men, who spend on average 3 hours 15 minutes per day doing household chores. However, over all, the division of labour in the Swedish family has become more equal. In 1990, women stood for 62% of all the time spent doing household chores. 20 years later, women do 56%, and men do 44.”<sup>125</sup>

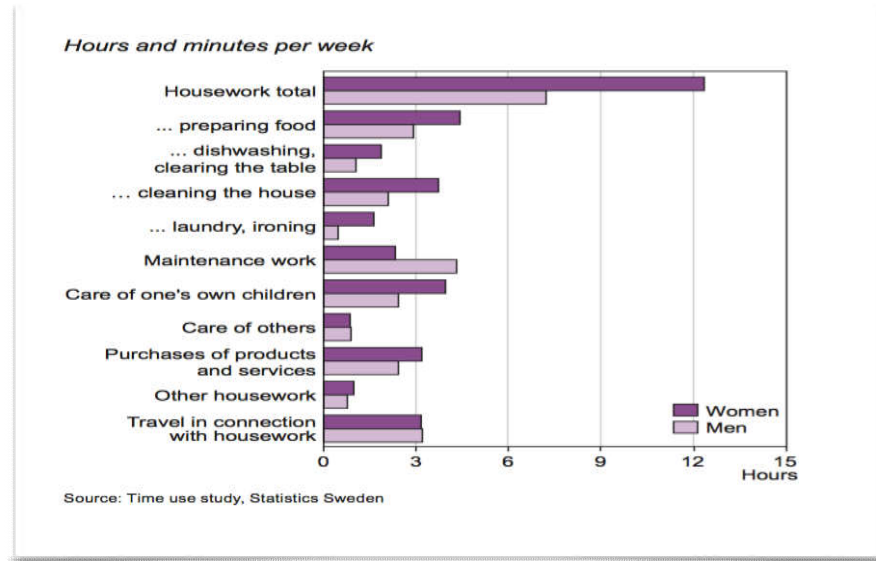
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<sup>124</sup> Sex role attitudes, time spent in paid work and relative power relations between men and women within family mark the basic of most of research on household and family research. There is wide variations in research findings with respect to identifying correlation between housework involvement and sex role attitudes. Some research (Bird and Scruggs, 1984) suggested that couples who hold egalitarian attitude in their gender relations share the household work more equally. However, some research refuted the same saying that there is no relationship between house work involvement and sex role attitudes (Geerken and Gove, 1983; Coverman, 1985).

<sup>125</sup> It investigates into actual time spent on regular household tasks. Through this time use study, Statistics of Sweden conducted research over three thousand people in the age group of 15-84 with the

[The figure below reflects upon number of hours used by female and male in the household and care work in Swedish families].

Figure 3.1 Time for Unpaid Work for Persons aged 2010/2011



Source: *Time Use Study, Statistics Sweden.*

'Gender systems approach' is extensively used by Feminist policy analysts in elucidating gender relations and gender division of labor underscoring socio-economic policies in Sweden. It helps to theoretically situate Sweden's parental leave policy and to conceptually represent the gender reconstruction embedded in the policy and its strategies (Crompton, 1999). Several feminists scholars like Pfau-Effinger, 1999; Sainsbury, 1999; Crompton (1999), have analysed the formation of new discourse on economic and social reproduction in Swedish society through the lens of gender systems approach. The approach includes two central characteristics:

"First, it recognises the complexity of structuring of gender relations and the multiplicity of their origins; thus economic determinism is avoided. Secondly, gender essentialism is rejected, and gender relations are viewed as socially constructed" (Crompton, 1999: 204). Positing a continuum of the gender division of labour, many feminists hold that this continuum in Sweden has been reformed and adjusted over the time with new socio-economic and political changes in society. The previous

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help of respondents "time-diaries" and interviews. For more details see <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2054&artikel=4673288>

‘breadwinner family model was questioned in public debates as being problematic for both women and men in a democratic society (Dahlstorm, 1962; Tiller, 1962).<sup>126</sup> Pfau-Effinger (1999) also suggests that Sweden can be described as moving from a ‘male breadwinner/female carer’ to a ‘dual earner/state-carer’ model.

The paradigm shift in earning model is based on the principle that family members are better off in family-equal relations. So the argument given in favour of dual earner/dual carer model is that it is “most likely to be associated with both gender equality and equality more generally” (Crompton 1999: 208). Hence, not only the promotion of employment for women as a full time worker has marked the way in modern Swedish history, men also become a priority in the direction to achieve gender-equal relations. This development distinguishes Sweden from most of other western welfare state.

In this direction, a unique family policy model in the Nordic countries was initiated about 60-70 years ago (Therborn, 2004). It defined three of its major purposes: (a) to promote equal opportunities between men and women; (b) to reduce the costs for parents of raising children and (c) to provide affordable and high quality public childcare for all children. The political understanding of such model was that dual earner model is better in stabilising economic condition of the family and more women participation in labour market brings substantial economic growth. Hence, the social and economic policies outlined during 1960-70s were focused more on individual economic independence of both men and women. This economic individuality necessitated an institutional framework to support the additional burden in the unpaid domestic world.

A wide range of de-familialisation policies was introduced further. For example social rights and benefits were individualised as in unemployment benefits, sickness benefits or pension of an individual are attributed to his/her individual income that is earned over the course of life time. The tax structure also became more individualized making each spouse accountable. Even Lone mothers are granted economic compensation through various means, such as extended child allowance and parental leave.

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<sup>126</sup> Cited in Björnberg 2008, p. 37

What made these policies remarkable is their shift in approach from 'women's issues towards more of a gender equal approach that arrest the need to transform gender relations in the family in order to achieve greater equality in the labour market.

The following segment discusses over the major reforms and initiatives which were sought to be directed towards achieving greater gender equality in the family and were made an integral part of the Swedish welfare discourse.

### ***3.3 Gender Aspects in Various Social and Economic Policies***

- I. ***Parental Leave Insurance***- Sweden was the first country to take a political step that called for father's participation in caring for children and also in gender equality process. It therefore introduced its parental leave system in order to bring transformation in men's socio-cultural role which not only arrests the need for men in caring task but also in gender equality process: "Parental Leave Insurance is acknowledged as the premiere parental leave policy design addressing gender equality" (Ray, Gornick, Schmitt, 2010).

An analysis of Swedish family policy reveals that "interests in expanding men's role beyond being breadwinners to become active caregivers of children occurred first in the 1960s and 1970s, during the time of a major labour shortage. At that time, feminist journalists and social scientists questioned how women could achieve equality in the labour market if they were expected to take on a "double role" as worker and homemaker-mother. They advocated an abolition of 'sex roles' in favour of transforming men's and women's roles so that men could become more involved in family life. To this end, a government commission was established to reform family law stating the need for both partners to support themselves and share domestic duties (Roman, 2009). It further recommended that parents of both sexes staying at home and caring for children will be provided with public services, therefore calling for changes in the social insurance system and replaced maternity leave with gender-neutral parental leave in 1974 (Roman, 2009). Sweden was also the first country in the world to allow fathers to share what was mother's right to take leave after child birth, granting fathers the right to take three of the six paid months of leave formerly available only to mothers(fathers could, however, still transfer their rights to mothers). Policy makers hoped that father's use of more leave would help maintain women's



position in the labour market and would also facilitate father-child relationships, which would in turn lead to more equal sharing of childcare (Klinth, 2002)<sup>127</sup>. Besides, maintenance obligations to spouses after divorce and widow's pensions were phased out and individual taxation earned income became mandatory to symbolize women's economic independence.<sup>128</sup> All these shows an increase parents' options in reconciling paid work and family life, "thus enabling the combination of extensive female employment and relatively high fertility, increasing fathers' participation in child-care and contributing to child welfare, mainly by lowering poverty risks" (Duvander and Ferrarini 2013: 3).

Being part of the Sweden's family policy,<sup>129</sup> parental leave system had undergone several reforms over the years.<sup>130</sup> What made this policy strikingly unique was its usage of language and area of responsibility. Since its beginning, it was associated with gender neutral term, treating men and women alike [unlike before, when specific gender were give specific reference name such as 'mother', or 'father] -consequently referring to 'parents' now. The parental leave system made it compulsory for all the Swedish citizens and the employers to contribute towards the goals of the same. The leave is usually taken by all those parents whose child is below 8 years. The core part of it is its provision for 'paid' earning-related benefit which is set at 90% of previous earnings, but if the parent had no previous earnings he or she receives a low flat

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<sup>127</sup> Cited in Haas and Hwang, p.308

<sup>128</sup> This derives its legitimacy from the adult worker/dual-breadwinner model/policies that Sweden proposed in the direction of achieving gender equality in the family.

<sup>129</sup> 'Alva Myrdal (1902-86) is considered the pioneer of Sweden's family policies who had suggested a number of reforms in Sweden with respect to legitimizing woman's stake at politics and state representation, to community and marketplace,' and therefore sought to challenge public-private split and the traditional gender roles for men and women. She never sentimentalised mothers whose limitations she viewed were socially constructed, she rather wanted women to enter politics to create social institutions that would enhance their independence. Instead of considering the state a replacement patriarchy, Myrdal viewed it as an instrument for women wresting control of their lives from male-dominated families. At the same time she was a realist who recognised the necessity of working with both men and women. She believed that the parental relationship of children was the feminist issue for Sweden and yet she also fought for women's equal opportunity in the labour market- All these were the core of her feminism'--For more details see Herman, S. R 1992.

<sup>130</sup> In 1974 Social Democrats (the then Swedish government) replaced the previous maternity leave policy with the new parental leave policy in which all Swedish parents were entitled to have 24 weeks paid leave with a wage replacement percentage at 90% of former wages. This meant that fathers for the first time achieved an individual right to take leave, and quite uniquely, that no parts of the leave were reserved for the mother. In the 1980s parental leave rights were extended in steps to a full year; from 1995, one month of earnings-related leave was reserved for each parent, which means that one parent – generally the mother – could no longer use up the whole leave. The months reserved for respective parents – in Sweden referred to as 'daddy-month' and 'mummy-month' – were extended to two months for each parent in 2002. Since 2002 the total leave period is 16 months, of which 13 are subject to earnings-related taxable benefit, paid at 80 per cent of previous gross earnings. See Duvander and Ferrarini, 2013: 3

rate.<sup>131</sup> This set-up worked as an incentive, as it pushed women more in to the labour market. The leave was extended and modified eventually over the decades in order to make it more participatory for men. In addition to this, the leave was formally made individual and compulsory for each parent, implying that the each parent required to share their due parental leave, and in case of sharing the leave of other parent, a consent is required from the other parent in written except for the reserved months.<sup>132</sup> If the designated parent did not use the month, then it was forfeited (Duvander and Johansson, 2012). A second reserved month for each parent was added in 2002, bringing the total leave time to 16 months. In 2006, another reform passed, targeting high earning fathers' participation by raising the income ceiling for benefits.<sup>133</sup> The purpose behind these reserved months was "...to make the father take at least one month" (Duvander and Johansson, 2010)

At present, the Swedish parents are entitled to 16 months (480 days) out of which 60 days are earmarked for the mother and 60 days for the father/partner. Parents can use it full-time, half-time, quarter-time and one-eight time until the child's eighth birthday. However, in order to receive the benefit of parental leave system, "parents are required to have worked for 240 days using the leave and thus claim earnings related benefits. Parents not meeting out the requirement usually receive a lot flat rate benefit that today is 225 SEK per day"( Duvander and Ferrarini, 2013: 3).

The provision for the reserved months in parental leave policy act as strategy of rights, both positive (supported by the state) and normative (not enforced by law, but

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<sup>131</sup> Initially, during 1980's when the leave rights were extended by stages to 12 months, and, in addition, a further three months were paid at a flat rate, cutbacks took place in earnings-related benefits, dropping from 90% to 75%, due to the economic crisis in the 1990s and were later raised to the current level of 80% (Duvander and Johansson 2012).

<sup>132</sup> These reserved months are called "daddy month" and "mommy month," respectively for men and women. The proposal for reserved months was initiated during 1995 by the liberal government's proposal following the example of Norwegian equivalent 'daddy month'(1993) which reserved assigned leave month for each parent.

<sup>133</sup> 'In 2006, the raising of the income ceiling for benefits was introduced to increase fathers' participation. The flat rate was as low as 60 SEK until July 2006, but has since been gradually increased to today's 225 SEK, partly reflecting that if the income ceiling were raised, fathers with high incomes would be more likely to take the leave, because they would get more of their income in benefits. This raising of the income ceiling also acted as strategy to decrease barriers to father's participation in care giving, particularly for high income earning fathers. The earnings ceiling was stable during the 1990s, so that an increasing proportion of parents did not in practice receive 80 per cent of earlier earnings. In 2006 the earnings ceiling was raised from 7.5 to 10 price base amounts, which increased the number of parents receiving it by 80 per cent, especially fathers, who typically have higher earnings. The increase was motivated by limiting the economic reasons for not using the leave gender-equally' (Duvander and Ferrarini, 2013: 5).

by society), as by designating the respective time for each parent, it ensures a positive right, supported by law, to take that given parental leave. Resonating with the legal provision, the policy reframes care giving in gender equal ways and makes fathers legally bound and also support their behavioral change in society. It also ensures child's right to have access to both parents and, specifically, children's rights to their fathers' time (Duvander and Johansson, 2010).

Another remarkable element in the parental insurance system is the 'gender equality bonus.'<sup>134</sup> It was introduced in 2008 by the newly elected Conservative-Liberal coalition government aiming to encourage parents to share parental leave as evenly as possible. Under this reform, when the parent who has been home for the longest hours receives a tax credit, while the other parent is claims parental benefit. The underlying objective was that, more the leave is shared, the more bonus the parents receive. At present, the bonus entitles parents with equal leave use to a tax reduction of 100 SEK per day. It can be used for all the shareable earnings-related days – that is, nine out of the total 13 months, as two are reserved for each parent. If leave is shared equally between the mother and father, the family receives a maximum of 13,500 SEK (Duvander and Ferrarini, 2013: 5).

However, this initiative has received criticisms on the ground that it was paid only during the following fiscal year and the family had to prove that the other parent was in work while one was on leave and also the family had to apply for the bonus. But this system was adjusted and simplified in 2012 in which the previous system of putting it as a tax credit for which parents' were required to apply and which is accordingly paid to parents' tax account the year after the parental leave was used, is now changed and paid directly to the parents, together with the parental leave benefit and without the need to apply.

The policy also attempts to change the perspective of women's behavior towards their work and family, which they see as complimenting rather than competing with each other. The economic incentives for sharing parental leaves, not only acts as an

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<sup>134</sup> It falls under the second phase of reformation in Swedish family policy. During the election of 2006, the coalition govt advocated a number of reforms to family policy, including a gender equality bonus in the earnings-related part of parental insurance; a flat-rate home care allowance; a voucher system in day-care; increased pedagogical ambitions in public day-care centres; and tax deductions for household services. Some of these reforms can be expected to strengthen the earner-carer orientation of policy, while others leave greater room for market solutions, as well as more pronounced traditional family orientations.

inducement strategy but also provides a sense of security to both men and women, therefore motivating them to share the leave more evenly. According to Stone, parental leave policy lets parents receive a percentage of their income from their employment at the time of leave taking (which has ranged from 70 to 90 percent) or at a low flat rate. This becomes an inducement in the form of a reward<sup>135</sup> and this reward-based relationship between the policy giver and receiver can create a bond. As the reward encourages fathers to take off more time, it further stimulates mothers' participation in the labor market. Pylkkanen and Smith (2004) found that economic incentives and leave periods of fathers change the behaviours of mothers.<sup>136</sup>

The element of gender approach in the parental leave policy is reflected in the way it deconstructs the gendered position of men and women in the social hierarchy by 'altering gendered behaviour in breadwinning and child care' (Haas and Hwang, 1999; Haas, 2003). The parental leave system as a policy instrument can be seen as initiating a cultural project of new masculinity<sup>137</sup> that goes beyond the hegemonic notions of masculinity-that produces a certain kinds of person, the heterosexual male who is a hero who saves, who is a protector and provider of the family, and not to do certain things that is socially considered as feminine like care work and housework-thus deconstructing the traditional image of men. Bringing a change in the discourse of masculinity is important in order to achieve gender equality, because masculinity places men in a particular kind of gender position in society in which their gendered role and responsibilities depend on how women are relatively placed in that social hierarchy.<sup>138</sup> *The New York Times* states (2009) about this "new" masculinity that is slowly emerging in Sweden-masculinity where:-"Men Can Have It All"- a successful career and being a responsible daddy [...] 'It's a new kind of manly [...] It's more wholesome.'<sup>139</sup> The news paper finds that "from trendy central Stockholm to this village in the rugged forest South of the Arctic Circle, 85 percent of Swedish fathers

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<sup>135</sup> If policy receiver does the intended behavior (i.e. takes the leave) the policy giver (i.e. Swedish government) offers a reward (i.e. parental benefit).

<sup>136</sup> They explain this finding by the fact that family friendly policies in Sweden have focused much more on flexible leave schemes and on shared responsibilities.

<sup>137</sup> Masculinity is a relationship not only between men and women but between men and men. Whereas patriarchy produces all men as superior to all women, masculinity is process of producing some men as superior to not only all women but to other men.

<sup>138</sup> Because the notion of masculinity produces the heterosexual man-his manhood and maleness as universal category and rejects their role in family life as equal stakeholder of household and caring work as something unsubstantial.

<sup>139</sup> See Benhold, Katrin (2009)

take parental leave.<sup>140</sup> The parental leave policy therefore, seeks to reshape a Swedish culture into one that necessities ‘undoing gendered role’ within families and interrogate traditional notions of masculinity and opens up new ways of defining masculinity and femininity as something not contained by social norms but which can be defined in the negotiations of involved gender. The markers of femininity as being supportive of something where masculinity emerges as superior category is therefore denounced and in place emerges a man who is an agent of social change.

*(i) Use and Effects of Parental Leave-*

Many research studies point out that parental leave regulations have not only stimulated the perception towards greater equality, but along with the cultural fabric of Swedish society and its socio-economic conditions and embedded values for democracy and social justice provide a conducive environment for the uptake in father’s parental leave. Looking at the development of men’s share of parental leave since its inception, the trend shows a mixed results. Men’s use of parental leave has increased slowly but steadily over time. When parental leave was introduced in 1974, men used 0.5% of all days only. Since then, men’s share has increased, reaching 23.1% in 2010. Since 2009 the trend is rising although at a slow pace reaching to men’s share of 24% in 2011. The 2008 reform also had improved men’s share although it has been facing challenges and not having any clear connection to the increase in numbers over the last years. The 2012 reforms also have brought positive response but are yet to be evaluated. However, there are disagreements among the scholars over the use and effect of parental leave policy. Many studies point out that, while there is an increasing trend among men, it has not been proportionate to the degree of women’s participation in the unpaid work:

‘while the inclusion of fathers as potential users of parental leave was groundbreaking, the changes in family law did not really alter Scandinavian men's roles as fathers, because few fathers only took advantage of their new rights. In 1992, only 10% Swedish father’s took parental leave days whereas Danish fathers took 5%, followed by Norwegian fathers of 1%. This lack of progress towards fathers’ intake in sharing care work prompted Norwegian policy makers(1933) to make bring radical changes in leave legislation, setting aside

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<sup>140</sup> *Supra note 139.*

four weeks of parental leave for fathers as an individualized non-transferable entitlement. All Scandinavian nations' parental leave programmes provide parents with a similar earnings-based wage replacement i.e. 80-100% of wages up to a high income ceiling. This sends a strong message that parental care is socially valued and an important prerequisite for the development of a dual-earner/dual-caregiver society. Father's use of their non-transferable right to wage -based parental leave is very high in Norway and Sweden. The vast majority (90%) of Swedish fathers took advantage of their leave for children born in 1998. This high usage rate of parental leave however encourages most of male employees as a group, therefore, makes it easier to avoid the stress and strain of being in the minority, or being the only one to take leave to provide care for children. Another important aspect is that highly educated with holding high position in jobs along with high income base increases the possibility of using parental leave more frequently. It is also found that when partners earn income close to their partners i.e. having a "gender balance in breadwinning has a strong effect on father's use of parental leave. Although Government-mandated parental leave policies have a modest effect on Scandinavian father's involvement in early childcare, yet the existence of such policies and the acceptability of such policies sends out an important political message to citizens that fathers should be active participants in the care of children. And in case of Sweden this appears to be particularly true where the government is very proactive in encouraging fathers' to take parental leave. This phenomena has extended over three decades and has helped to develop a norm of involved fatherhood'( (Hass et.al, 2013, p. 308-310)

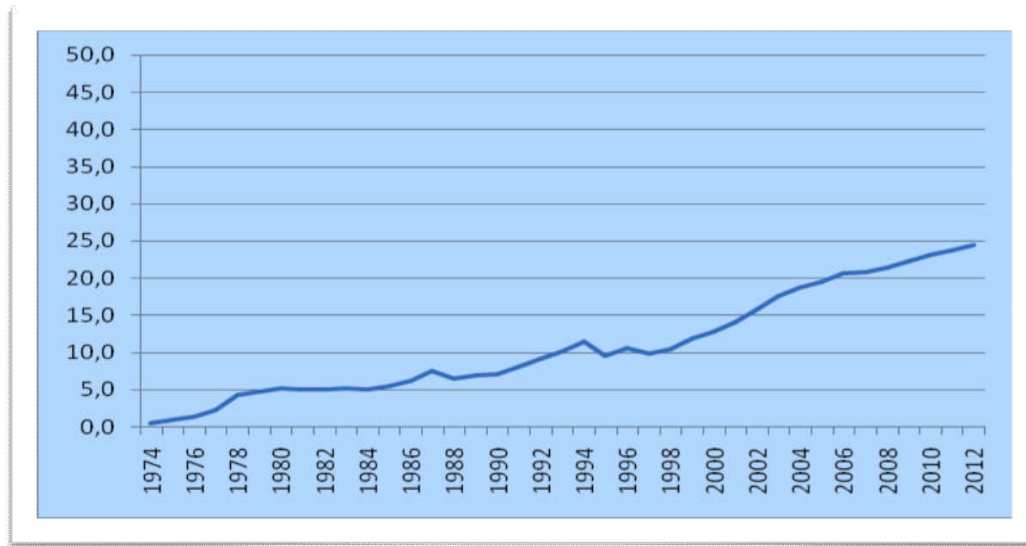
'In comparison to men in other countries, Swedish men take parental leave relatively frequently (Kamerman, 2000), but they have certainly not entered the realm of household activities to the extent as women have entered the labour market' (Duvander and Andersson, 2005). Some scholars also suggest that Parental leave is used by practically all mothers and nearly 9 out of 10 fathers make use of parental leave benefits. Fathers on average use 91 days of leave (Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2012 a).<sup>141</sup> As a matter of fact, considerable flexibility of parental leave often leads to misuse of the same as; for example, by saving parts of the leave to extend

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<sup>141</sup> See Duvander and Ferrarini 2013, p.

summer vacations or reduce working hours during the child's preschool years. The leave may be extended, by accepting a lower replacement level, a strategy used especially by mothers (Duvander & Johansson 2012).

Figure: 3.2 Father's Share of Parental Leave Days (%)



Source: Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2012a

The percentage of sharing parental leave by men shows increasing trend with the introduction of the first reserved daddy months, however, the participation was very low prior to 1995, when 44% of fathers used to take leave only. But this share went up to 77% in 1995. According to Duvander, the gender equality bonus was surprisingly not gaining much attention and it did not alter the usual parental leave structure. Altogether there have been a slow yet steady trend in father's increased share on parental leave benefits and this trend continued after the bonus was introduced (Ibid. 8).

There are apprehensions that although men in Sweden are exceptionally active as parents, it has still not come half way to the goal of men and women actually sharing parental leave equally, and this is a vital problem. Also the parental leave system does not ensure if men are actually engaging in the unequal division of unpaid work within the home. The slower pace in the intake of parental leave explains women's propensity for working part time due to their shouldering household and caring responsibility, and could also be linked to women's disproportional amount of sick

leave that further leads to bring lower career growth for women. An extensive period of parental leave for men, i.e. 90 days or more, gives long-term positive effect on sharing of responsibilities in the home. Shorter periods do not challenge the traditional gendered expectations as much as to change the division of care work. Men's responsibility for parental leave is still negotiable and optional in a different way than for women (Klinth 2008, p. 22-23). When women use the larger part of the parental leave scheme it results in a "women's trap".

A study from the Swedish Institute for Labor Market and Educational Policy Evaluation (IFAU) shows how the gender pay gap still exists in Sweden and is constant for the last 30 years, foremost relates to unequal division of child care. 15 years after the first child was born the male-female gender gaps in income had increased with 35 percentage points, for wages the increase was 10 percentage points (Angelov, Johansson & Lindahl 2013). All these facts may link up to the persistent gender inequality in Sweden. The unequal gender distribution of parental leave has been attributed to several reasons, including the fact that fathers often earn the most in a couple, as well as some norms about who is most suitable to take care of the children.

However, things are changing and people are responding to the positive effects of parental leave system. Some studies show that "In Sweden, both the mother's and father's earnings have had a positive impact on the father's use of leave, with father's earnings having a greater impact than mother's (cf., Sundström & Duvander, 2001)."<sup>142</sup> "Bekkengen (2002) found that only in Swedish couples where the woman and the man share or plan to share the parental leave did negotiations take place."<sup>143</sup> According to Almqvist (2008) economic situations become a dominant factor in influencing the intake of parental leave:

"Mothers having no or lower incomes were important reasons why they took all or the majority of the parental leave regardless of whether they were French or Swedish. For couples who earned about the same salary some differences were shown. French fathers underlined the importance of the mother and the child together when talking about parental leave, whereas Swedish fathers stressed the importance of being with their children, during parental leave"(p.198).

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<sup>142</sup> Cited in Almqvist 2008 ,p. 194

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.



Almqvist(2008) finds that parental leave has implications regarding hegemonic masculinity in Sweden as for her Swedish fathers expressed both in practice and rhetoric, that participation in the care of children is important (In practice, it is expressed through taking a larger portion of paid parental leave and in rhetoric, they indicated involvement in the care of children as part of negotiations with the mothers about their leave choices). In her findings, Almqvist suggest that some real change may have taken place in Swedish hegemonic masculinity as Swedish fathers do not explicitly state it is the mother's job only to take care of the children, but also expressed their interest towards the care of young children.

Another empirical study (Plantin et al. 2003) also confirms that the contemporary discourse of the 'involved father' influence and affects men's practices. Although the process of taking up parental leave is uneven, men's practices as fathers are shifting towards more involvement in childcare and household labour. The male respondents in the sample not only seem to participate in this discourse in a positive way, but, more significantly the men in Swedish sample talked positively about gender equality and argued for shared responsibility in family work. The following quotation from one of the respondents illustrates how deeply rooted this system stays in some men's memories and experiences:

"I remember my father as very active in the family, and I can't see any major differences between him and my mother on that matter. They were both working full-time, but my mother worked irregular hours. So, one can say they overlapped each other at home. When she was working in the evenings and weekends, he took over all the duties at home. He took care of us children, cleaned the house, and I have strong memories of his enormous enthusiasm over cooking good food. I don't think that was something unique for men to be like that at the time. (Patrik, Swedish man, first-time father, aged 31)"

The overall argument that goes in favour of this policy instrument is that, it relates to the concept of 'free choice'-for men and women to choose how to split the leave between them. "Society is a mirror of the family and the only way to achieve equality in society is to achieve equality in the home. Getting fathers to share the parental leave is an essential part of that" (Bennhold, 2010).

## *II. Public Child Care and Gender Equality*

Supporting the emerging dual-breadwinner/adult worker model has primarily been the reason for introducing public child care policy<sup>144</sup> in Sweden. With the consequent increasing of women's labour market participation<sup>145</sup> during 1960s and 1970s along with falling birthrates, growing demands were made by parents and female workers for the expansion of public childcare facilities (Swedish Institute, 2004a)<sup>146</sup>. It also attracted attention during 1960s because of labour shortage and consequent cost of living in Sweden which made it financially mandatory for both women and men to work outside home. Haas (1991) reiterated that though the labour shortage crisis persists, nonetheless, Sweden encouraged women more to enter the labour market instead of recruiting foreign workers whose assimilation was perceived to be problematic. This in turn led the government to "create a comprehensive support system for families with young children, a system designed to enable mothers and fathers to work outside the home..." (Gunnarsson 1993: 497). The Swedish welfare state therefore, developed public childcare policy that would encourage women to be both mothers and workers.

'Since 1960s Swedish welfare state made a lot of efforts and national control seeking out to have a national model of childcare with minimum standards (Alvestad and Samuelsson, 1999). Therefore, in 1966 Sweden granted full-time public childcare centres to be doubled and encouraged to have expansion and improvement of the quality of public care service. There were subsequent expansion took place during 1970s with the aim of having a uniform public childcare system across Sweden. However, the expansion of public childcare services in the 1970s and 1980s dramatically increased the responsibilities of the municipalities which provided public

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<sup>144</sup> 'The work of the National Commission on Childcare in the late 1960s laid the foundation for the Swedish pre-school model that exists today – daycare centres and play schools were combined into a pre-school system that would serve the interests of children while at the same time allowing parents to work (Swedish Institute, 2004a, mentioned in Earles, Kimberly (2008). 'The public childcare in Sweden is provided mainly by the municipalities and is financed by government subsidies as well as by parent's fees though to a minor extent. The fee structure was dependent on family income and the number of hours a child spent in the day care centre, but has a ceiling-the so-called maxtaxa introduced in 2002. In the 1970s and 1980s, the state and the municipalities each covered about 45% of the costs, but the proportion of parents' contribution rose to 17% by the late 1990s' (See Livia Sz. Blah and Eva M. Bernhardt (eds.) 2008: 1135.

<sup>145</sup> For Swedish women with children under the age of seven, participation increased from 35 percent in 1964 to 50 percent in 1970, and to 60 percent in 1975...In Norway, a similar development occurred about ten years later. See Sorensen, et. al 2002.

<sup>146</sup> Cited in Earles, Kimberly(2008): 6.

childcare in Sweden. The expansion continued throughout 1980s with more public funds, yet the municipalities were falling behind fulfilling the number of places. In 1995, the government enacted a new legislation- “Act on Child Care”- which compelled municipalities to provide childcare without any further delay. This legal step along with mounting birthrate resulted into a record number of childcare openings in Sweden (Kimberly 2008: 7-8).

‘Initially Public childcare was available only for children of those employed parents who involve in at least 20 hours a week in gainful employment, however, it was extended to the children of unemployed parents since 2002 and those who are on parental-leave, are guaranteed three hours a day at the daycare center. At present, almost all the children of full-time working parents are enrolled in public childcare, with some minor differences across educational levels and socio-economic statuses. There is a phenomenal increase in overall enrolment of children aged 0-6 years in public daycare centres which increased from 2% in 1966 to 53% in 1996. During 1990s the share of children enrolment in public family day care got increased more than private care homes which is 17% and 15% respectively’(Livia and Bernhardt, 2008: 1135).

While the public child care system was extensively provided for women’s employment, factors like accessibility, quality and price have greatly affected women’s career options. There are studies that show that although in Sweden mother’s employment was the result of an intensive gender equality policy and the extension of public childcare, the development was seen other way round:

“mothers entered the labour market first and this created a demand for public childcare. Swedish mothers entered the labour market long before there was enough public childcare. In 1965, 3% of all pre-school children, or about 25,000 children, were in public childcare; about half in childcare centres and the other half in family day care. At the same time, 36 per cent of all mothers of pre-school children, or almost 200,000 mothers, were employed” (Nyberg 2004: 8).

Although the increasing trend of women entering into labour market was supported by private institutions or informal care arrangements and majority of parents arranged child care in the informal sector which was common during 1980s (Nyberg 2000), nonetheless, public child care together with parental leave is seen as bringing transformation which became significant characteristics of the “new” Swedish welfare and gender equality model.

Table: 3.1 Children in Pre-School, Leisure time Centres and Pedagogical Care by type of Operations and age of child 2013 (Proportion (%) of all Children in each age group)<sup>147</sup>

Type of Operations	1-5 Years	6-9 Years	10-12 Years
Municipal Pre-School (day care centre)	68	0	.
Pre-School Under Private Management	17	0	.
Municipal Leisure Time Centre	0	74	16
Leisure time Centre Under Private Management	0	9	3
Pedagogical Child Care Under Municipal Management	2	0	0
Pedagogical Child Care Under Private Management	1	0	0

*Source: Swedish National Agency for Education*

<sup>147</sup> Collated from Statistics Sweden, 2014, "Women and men in Sweden 2014", *Population Statistics Unit*, p.41

Table: 3.2 Enrolled Children in pre-schools, Leisure time Centres and Pedagogical Care 1972-2013 (Number of children in the population in 1000s and percentage (%) in each group)<sup>148</sup>

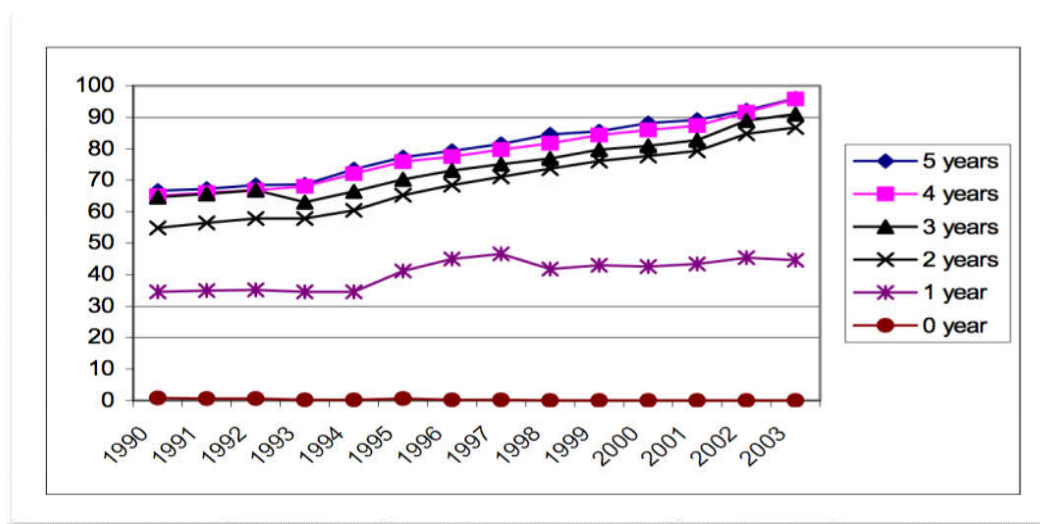
Age	1972		1980		1990		2000		2013	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1-5i	689	12	604	36	641	57	471	65	572	87
6-9ii	360	6	338	22	289	50	482	62	432	83
10-12	316	1	332	3	294	7	367	6	300	20

(i)-The Years 1972, 1980 and 1990 refer to ages 1-6

(ii)-The Years 1972, 1980 and 1990 refer to ages 7-9.

Source: Swedish National Agency for Education

Figure 3.3 Proportion of Children in Different Age Groups, % in Public Childcare Children Centers/pre-school and Family Day Care), 1990-2003



Source: 1990–1993 calculated from data on the number of children enrolled and the number of children in each age group in *Statistiskårsbok*; 1994–1999 *Skolverket 2000*; 2000–2002 *Skolverket 2003b*; 2003 – information from *Skolverket*<sup>149</sup>

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Collated from Nyberg, Anita 2004: 4.

Table: 3.3 The Supply of Public Child Care and Mother's Employment

Year	Children in Childcare, %	Employed mothers %	Employed mothers excl.those absent for care of child, %**
1965	3.0	36.0	
1970	8.7	48.6	
1975	15.1	59.1	
1980	31.3	73.8	66.0*
1985	44.6	81.2	69.2
1990	49.0	85.1	63.8
1991	49.8	82.5	62.1
1992	50.6	79.6	60.3
1993	49.9	74.8	58.6
1994	54.8	72.5	58.2
1995	58.7	72.7	59.5
1996	61.2	71.7	59.9
1997	62.6	71.1	60.1
1998	62.7	72.1	60.8
1999	64.0	74.1	62.7
2000	64.7	76.1	63.1
2001	65.2	77.6	63.7
2002	68.8	77.6	62.9

\* 1981 \*\* excl. women absent from work because of care of child including those on parental leave. Source: calculated from data from Labour Force Surveys from Statistics Sweden and data from Skolverket<sup>150</sup>.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

There has been a growing trend with respect to share of children of employed mothers in public childcare since 1965 which continued to be on rise reaching almost 50% in 1990 and when 85% of mothers of pre-school children were employed. Many were absent from work in order to take care of their children. However, in spite of working mothers' decline in number over the time, the share of children in public childcare increased dramatically. This continued expansion can be explained by the fact that political commitment to childcare has other objectives than furthering women's employment and gender equality, and that the emphasis on the importance of different objectives has changed over time (Nyberg. 2004: 9).

One such important objective was to ensure equality in children's conditions like the need for children's overall development, education for children and lifelong learning, which arrests the need for a pre-school set up in the education system. Eventually, children of all parents irrespective of their background were enrolled into public child care system. Health to the Ministry of Education and Science replaced the Ministry of Social Affairs in taking responsibility for this new system in 1966 and introduced a new curriculum for children of 1–5 years of age. Public childcare therefore goes beyond the objective of supporting women's employment and made it more of an investment in human capital in a post-industrial, knowledge-intensive economy (ibid.)

### ***III. Individual Taxation and Gender Equality:***

Following the principle of social justice, freedom of choice and gender equality that mark the political vocabulary of Swedish welfare state, the individual tax system was introduced. It was seen as an unambiguous step towards the greater financial independence for women. The biggest reform in the direction of gender equality was done during 1970s when the previous joint (family) taxation was abolished and got replaced with individual taxation<sup>151</sup>.

As of now the married and unmarried couples had both their national and local taxes calculated on the basis of their combined incomes. The agreement over the individual taxation came after a continuous debate for about 70 long years since 1959 as it was considered to be difficult and technically not viable. The introduction of the tax reform implied a changed view of women: they were no longer regarded as

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<sup>151</sup> Before being formally introduced, the 1970 Bill proposed two major changes in the taxation system: first, the introduction of individual taxation, and second, a reduction in the taxation of income for a large part of population.

mothers/spouses, in this respect, but as independent, gainfully employed individuals. Separate taxation has been regarded as perhaps the most important step in promoting equality between women and men<sup>152</sup>.

Since the beginning individual taxation seemed problematic as there was much support for a dominant gender discourse that validates for a natural taxable unit-the home-run by men. Demands in favour of individual taxation were made initially in the 1904 with irregular appearance subsequently. The question regarding joint taxation surfaced during mid 1940s. The matter of opposition to joint taxation was that ‘the system involved a penalty for marriage, negatively affecting the marriage rate and thereby the birth rate, joint taxation of spouses was, from the mid-1940s addressed as primarily a question of married women’s labour market participation.’<sup>153</sup> However, since the reasoning about solutions to the problem was still framed by ‘the natural order of the gender discourse’, this new perspective was not in itself sufficient to change the Swedish tax legislation (Bergstrom 2004: 1-3).

There were various Commission reports like that of 1949, 1951 and 1959 that defended the joint taxation of spouses on the ground that the marital household was the natural taxable unit.<sup>154</sup> According to Bergstrom, it was only when “the challenge to the dominant gender discourse became so strong that the natural order lost its degree of naturalness,” the transition from joint to separate taxation became possible (ibid.: 3). The Individual Taxation was formally implemented in 1971 with the goal of providing better institutional preconditions for gender equality and also recognised women as breadwinners thus making them independent tax payers. This new system made spouses to be taxed separately abolishing the economic disincentives built into the earlier system (Haas 1991)

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<sup>152</sup> Cited in Baude, Annika (1979): 145-175.

<sup>153</sup> See Melby Kari, et al. 2009.

<sup>154</sup> ‘The 1949 report advocated that joint taxation of spouses is a ‘natural consequence of the modified dual breadwinner model of the 1921 Marriage Act. It reasoned out that a married couple’s ability to pay was greater, since the domestic work of the wife produced an income in kind that was not taxed. That married couples, where both had an income in cash, paid unfairly high taxes was not considered important by the Commission and married women’s labour market participation was understood as a question of social rather than fiscal/economic policy. The 1951 Commission report therefore upheld the idea of a married couple’s household as an economic unit and mandated that spouses should be taxed jointly. The idea of married women’s domestic work as productive was abandoned (Bergstrom, 2004: 5-9).



What mostly argued in favour of the individual taxation as against joint taxation is the ‘ability-to-pay principle’ together with gender equality objective. The abolition of joint taxation of spouses was argued not the ground that it legitimizes women’s dependency on their counterpart or husbands for their income. During 1970s, joint taxation<sup>155</sup> was mostly considered as tax expenditure which was linked to social benefits. Women’s claims for social benefits therefore necessitated their relation with their husband or their relation with the earned man in the family. The individual taxation brought fiscal neutrality establishing the principle of non-discrimination and equality in treatment.<sup>156</sup> In contrast to Germany and France, the only principles established in the Swedish Constitution that are relevant for this tax policy issue, are non-discrimination and equality of treatment.<sup>157</sup> While the earlier system of joint taxation of married couples decreased the contribution of female earnings, individual taxation has stimulated married women’s labour market participation by making their earnings a higher proportion of after-tax earnings than of before-tax earnings in the family budget (Gustaffsson, 1992). The combination of individual taxation and highly progressive tax rates has favoured an equalisation of participation and time spent in market work by husbands and wives (Gustafsson, 1992) and a more equal division of time in housework (Juster and Stafford, 1991).

However, there are some disagreements regarding the issue of ‘‘ability-to-pay’ principle which is usually seen in terms of both tax equity and social justice.<sup>158</sup> The criticism around the Swedish tax reform (1991) is that it had changed the content of the ability-to-pay-principle and transformed it into a neutrality principle in order to legitimise the structuring of a uniform tax base for fiscal purposes. Social justice was

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<sup>155</sup> However, in compare to other joint taxation system, the Swedish joint taxation system was less oppressive towards married women. Even if spouses were taxed jointly, Swedish legislators took the full consequence of the 1921 Marriage Act which abandoned the husband’s guardianship of his wife and gave husband and wife the right to fill in their own separate tax returns and pay taxes separately. Swedish income tax law also gave the wife the right to receive the wife deduction to compensate for costs connected with working outside the home (Bergstrom, 2004: 4)

<sup>156</sup> However, there were resistance to the implementation of individual tax system as well. Christina Florin emphasises the strange fact that if men, as husbands gained from the old system of joint taxation, housewives did not find allies among organisations dominated by men. It was the young wage-earning women who gained the support of the press and of men with poor. In 1969 the labour shortage became acute in Sweden, and although in the Spring of 1970 the Social Democratic Government faced a private petition initiated by a housewife and signed by 63,000 citizens, for the preservation of joint taxation, it did not waver.

<sup>157</sup> See Gunnarsson, Å. (2011)

<sup>158</sup> Tax equity is a formal aspect of tax fairness promoting impartiality in the treatment of tax payers. Social justice on the other, has redistributive objectives, and when this principle is applied, an individual’s ability to pay should be assessed according to a progressive income tax rate schedule.

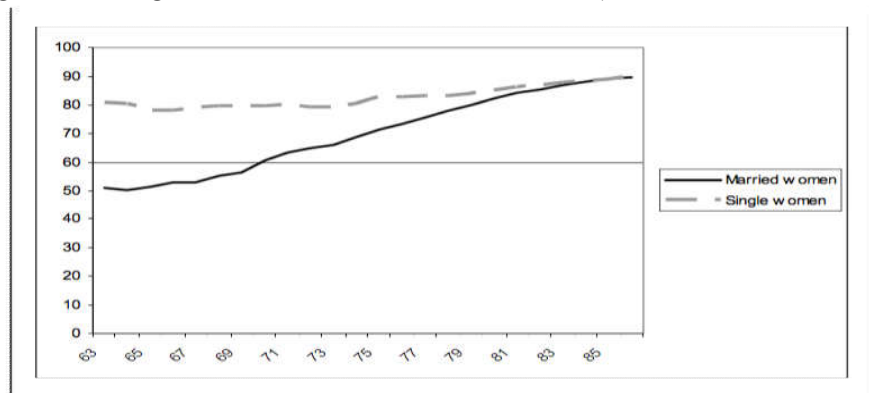
also not served by the neoliberal tax ideology behind the restructuring of income tax. The benchmark introduced during the 1991 Swedish tax reform stated that tax regulations with a social purpose were to be seen as political interventions in the market economy. Even the tax equity issue also seems contradictory as in one hand, there are market-oriented concepts of gender equality that argue for labour market participation as the means for women to achieve economic autonomy and emancipation; on the other, there is the argument that by recognising work in the home as valuable and productive (for example, by taxing the value of imputed income), women’s economic security would be improved (Staudt 1996).<sup>159</sup>

**(i) Effect of Individual Taxation:**

For a long time, the structure of income tax is considered an important determinant of married women’s labour market participation. In case of Sweden, underlying objective of individual tax reform of 1971 was to actually stimulate the female labour force participation. At various levels, the degree of women’s participation in many developed countries today is already being achieved by Sweden during 1970s:

For instance, “In 2007 Sweden reported the highest labour force participation rate among females aged 25 to 54 in the OECD – 87.1 %. As a matter of fact, Sweden reached the 2007 OECD average level, which is 70.3 %, already in 1974. Thus, the gender composition of the labour force today in most OECD countries has more in common with the Swedish situation in the 1970’s than the present one.”<sup>160</sup>

Figure: 3.4 Labour force participation rates (annual averages in percent) of married and single women aged 25 to 54 between 1963 and 1986.<sup>161</sup>



Source: Statistics Sweden, Labour Force Surveys.

<sup>159</sup> Cited in Gunnarsson, Å. 2011: 88.

<sup>160</sup> Selin, Hakan. 2014, p. 1

<sup>161</sup> Collated from Selin, Hakan 2014, p.2.

As can be seen from above Figure 3.4, the rapid growth in female participation rates in Sweden during the post-war era was primarily driven by a surge in married women's participation rates. The gap in the labour market participation between married and unmarried women almost disappeared during 1980s. The factors that were held responsible for such unprecedented growth was technological change, expansion of public sector and mostly the profound reforms in the area of family taxation. The 1971 tax reform in particular that had radically increased the net wages for a large number of married women is said to be the reason for greater participation of married women in the labour market. For example, Jaumotte (2003) in his findings show a correlation between the average tax facing the secondary earner in the household and the female participation rate in the OECD. 'Smith et.al. (2003) also expressed the influence of taxes on participation on cross sectional data from four European countries. This stimulation results indicate that the structure of the income tax system has a large effect of participation' (Selin, 2014: 2-7).

'However, there are some disagreement to the fact tax reform had not contributed to such development and the process of gender equality. The Swedish tax reform of 1991 is rather poorly designed from the perspective of both economic growth and women's equality. Although Swedish tax legislation system is gender-neutral but its impact on women causes them to suffer significant substantive inequalities. This inequality emanates from gender-related differences in work performances, entrepreneurship and investments. The point of contention arises around the fact that women's unpaid labour at home was not taken into consideration. Women's unpaid/household tasks which are mostly performed by women and which essentially contributes to the wider economy has not entitled women to receive wages or other economic benefits and therefore ignored it from tax purposes as being earned income in kind or a form of imputed income which further reinforces gendered division of labour. Therefore, although Sweden as a gender egalitarian welfare state promotes for individualisation of social rights and fiscal obligations, its gender neutrality element in the tax system does nothing to promote gender equality' (Brooks *et. al* 2011: 75-89).

### 3.3 Current situation in the Labour Market in Sweden

While gender inequality still exists in the labour market in Sweden, the scenario is comparatively better than average EU countries. The following segment gives a brief overview of the current situation of employment of women and men in Sweden in comparison to the overall EU-27 average. The data has been taken over the last few recent years to look at the trends. The idea is to present the current inequalities that still exist in labour market in Sweden and various aspects that characterises such gender segregation. However, what makes Sweden distinct is its approach towards constant efforts to better the situation.

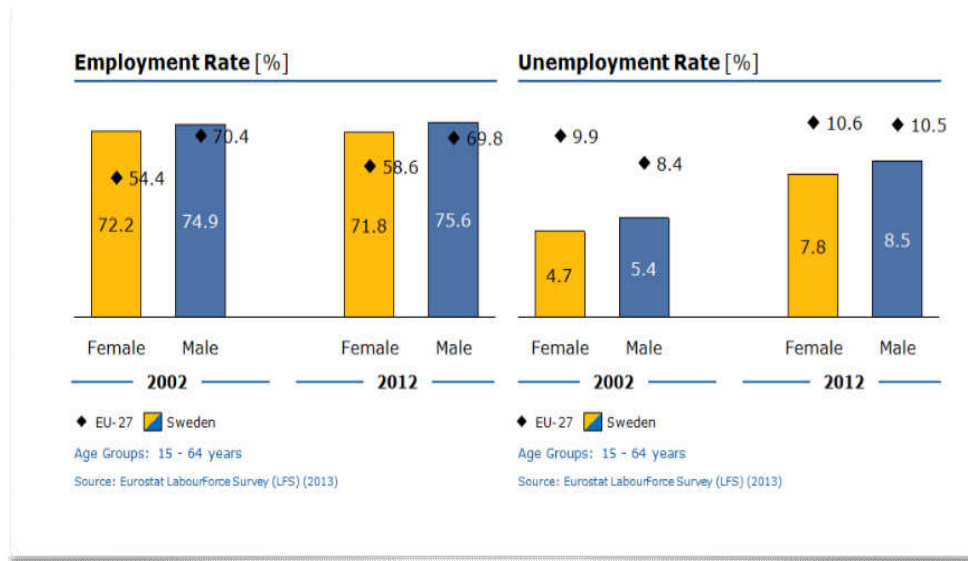
With respect to general participation of women employment rate the in labour market, women scores very high as compare to other EU countries. The employment rate of women in Sweden (71.8%) was the highest in the EU-27 and consequently above the EU-27 average (58.6%).<sup>162</sup> Women are as active as men in the labour market and thus there is a minor difference in employment rate between men and women which is only 3.8 % in 2012 and which shows stability since 2002. The more accessibility and acceptability of women labour force has turned Sweden into one of the leading country in the EU with respect to gender equality.

However, there is a bleak side as well. The gap in employment rate increases between women and men by age group. Nevertheless, it remains quite close together even in the age group of the 55 to 64 years old (7.5 % in 2010). The general participation rate for women (employment rate plus unemployment rate) for women in Sweden has been positive throughout even exceeding the EU-27 average by 10.4 pp (79.6% vs. 69.2%) in 2012. However, men still dominated the labour market with respect to higher participation (4.5% higher). The data could explain the unique approach of Swedish policy initiatives supporting work-family situation for men and women. The support system in which both parent are equally involved and the government and organisations institutionalised work-family balance programme, it yields diversity efforts in case of Sweden.

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<sup>162</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/epo\\_campaign/131006\\_country-profile\\_sweden.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/epo_campaign/131006_country-profile_sweden.pdf)

Figure 3.5 Labour market participation of women and men in Sweden in comparison to the EU-27



Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2013 (data from 2002, 2012).

Sweden has been dealing with higher level of part-time segregation, which even goes higher than the EU-27 average. 38.6% of Swedish women use flexible work arrangements, which go higher than the EU-27 average of 32.1%. On an average, women part-time employees work for 25.1 hours per week, while women in full-time work for 40.2 hours per week. This equals a 62.4% share of full-time working hours as compare to 50.2% share by men. This indicates that women are involved in part-time longer than their male counterparts. The part-time work has been on rise since 2002 and by 2012 it reached upto 6.3%. Though there diverse views regarding part-time arrangement. Some research scholars consider these part-time arrangements reinforce the idea of gender inequality as it hinders the career growth of women. However, some studies view it positively saying it goes hand in hand with the extensive public benefit system in Sweden. In Sweden the parents are entitled to have 16 months of paid leave per child and this leave is compensated at 80% of their recent income. Also this part-time arrangement is said to have largely effective for the fertility ratio as well in Sweden. Sweden has one of the highest fertility rates in Europe with an average of 1.9 children<sup>163</sup>. In 2011, 51% of children under the age of

<sup>163</sup> [http://europa.eu/familyalliance/countries/sweden/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/familyalliance/countries/sweden/index_en.htm)

three and 95% of children between three and school age were enrolled in formal childcare which is above the EU-27 (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.6 Part-time Segregation in Sweden in Comparison to the Overall EU-27

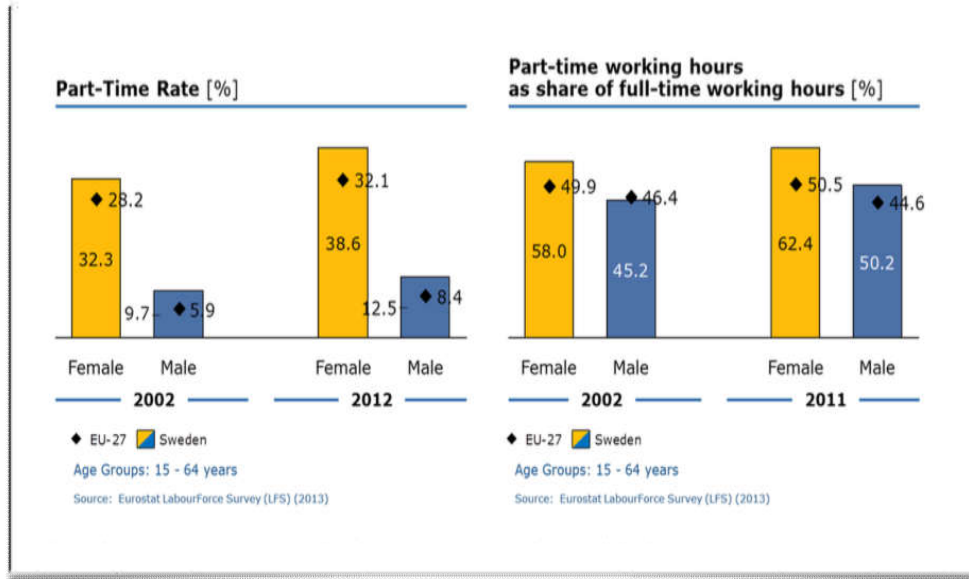
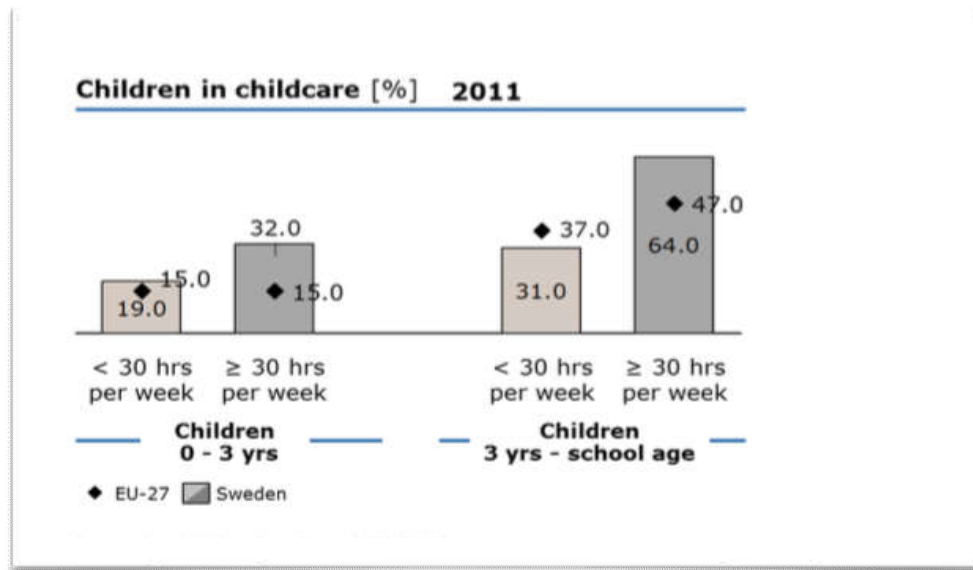


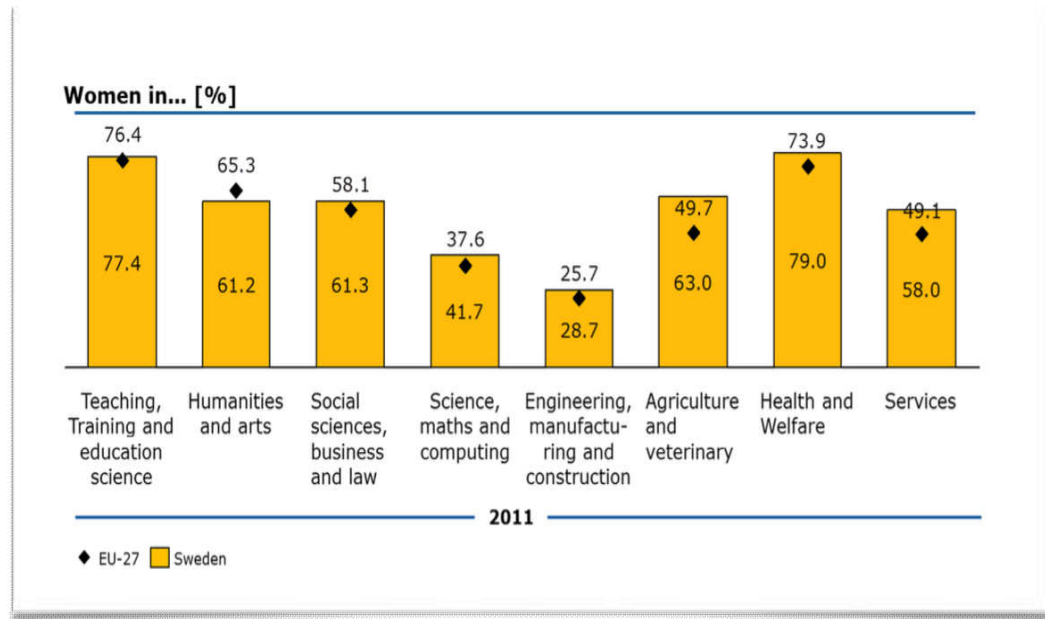
Figure 3.7 Childcare Arrangements in Sweden in Comparison to the EU-27



Source: Eurostat Labour Force survey (LFS) (2013)

The gender segregation is also reflected in the area of education in Sweden. There is relatively higher presence of typical male field of study in Sweden as likely to other European counterparts. Female students are mostly concentrated in the study of health, welfare, teaching, training and education, agriculture, veterinary etc. as compare to men who do mostly the mainstream studies like medical, engineering, administrative etc.

Figure 3.8 : Share of Women in Different Fields of Education in Sweden in Comparison to the EU-27



Source: Eurostat labour Force Survey (LFS) (2013)

Beside this, the Swedish economy also reflects a gender bias across some productive sectors. Only one of five most popular sectors, namely “whole sale and Retail sector holds the top 5 male sectors.

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

Table: 3.4 Distribution of Employment in the main NACE-2 digit sectors (2010)

% of Women Employed in	Sweden	EU-27	% of Men Employed in	Sweden	EU-27
Health & Social Work	26.3	18.2	Manufacturing	17.0	20.4
Education	17.0	11.7	Wholesale & Retails	12.9	13.1
Wholesale & Retail	10.9	15.1	Construction	12.0	12.1
Public Administration	7.0	7.1	Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities	8.7	4.9
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	6.8	5.2	Transportation & Storage	7.6	7.3
Accumulated Concentration	68.0	57.3	Accumulated concentration	58.2	57.8

Source: Eurostat labour force Survey (LFS) (2013), Data from 2010, RB calculations

Table: 3.5 Distribution of Employment in the main ISCO 3-digit occupations (2010)

% of Women Employed in	Sweden	EU-27	% of Men Employed in	Sweden	EU-27
Personal Service Workers	22.2	13.4	Legal, Social, Cultural Professionals	10.1	6.9
Legal, Social, Cultural Professionals	11.7	10.9	Building and related trades workers	9.3	9.9
Business and Administration Professionals	8.7	5.6	Science and Engineering Associate Professional	7.8	5.5
General and Keyboard Clerks	8.0	12.7	Drivers and mobile plant operators	7.6	7.4

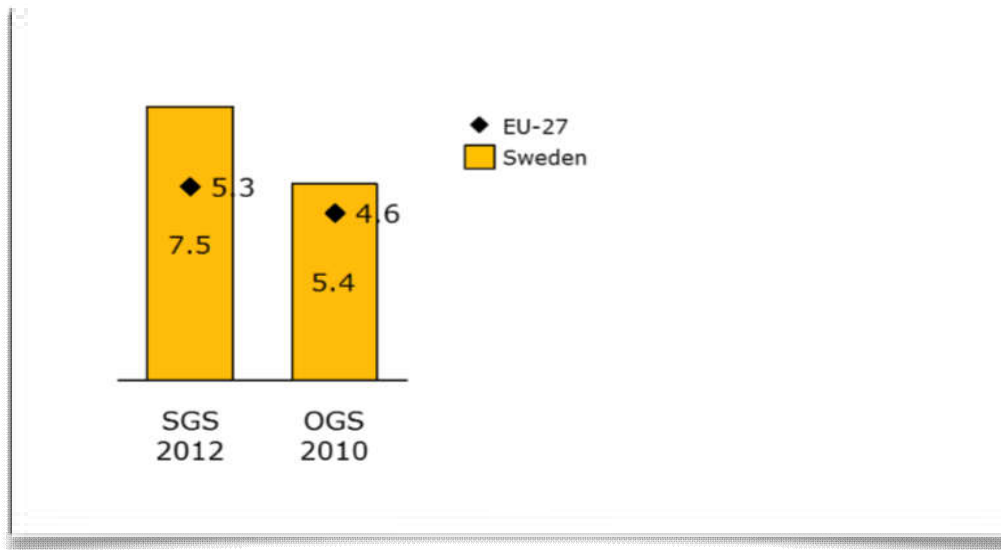


Teaching Professional	6.6	6.3	Science and Engineering professionals	7.2	5.5
Accumulated Concentration	57.2	48.9	Accumulated concentration	42.0	35.2

Source: Euro stat labour force Survey (LFS)(2013), Data from 2010, RB calculations

In order to compare the extent of horizontal segregation in Sweden with the overall EU-27 average, two horizontal segregation indicators are calculated: (1) The Sectoral Gender Segregation Indicator (SGS) and the (2) Occupational Gender Segregation Indicator (OGS): The extent of sectoral gender segregation (SGS) in Sweden (7.5 pp) is well above the EU-27 level (5.3 pp). Consequently, Sweden would benefit from motivating women to enter "typically male" economic sectors and men to enter "typically female" economic sectors. The extent of occupational gender segregation (OGS) in Sweden (5.4 pp) is significantly higher than the overall OGS of the EU-27 (4.6 pp). Consequently, Sweden should consider additional incentives for women to enter "typically male" economic occupations and men to enter "typically female" occupations.

Figure: 3.9 Horizontal Gender Segregation Indicators (%)

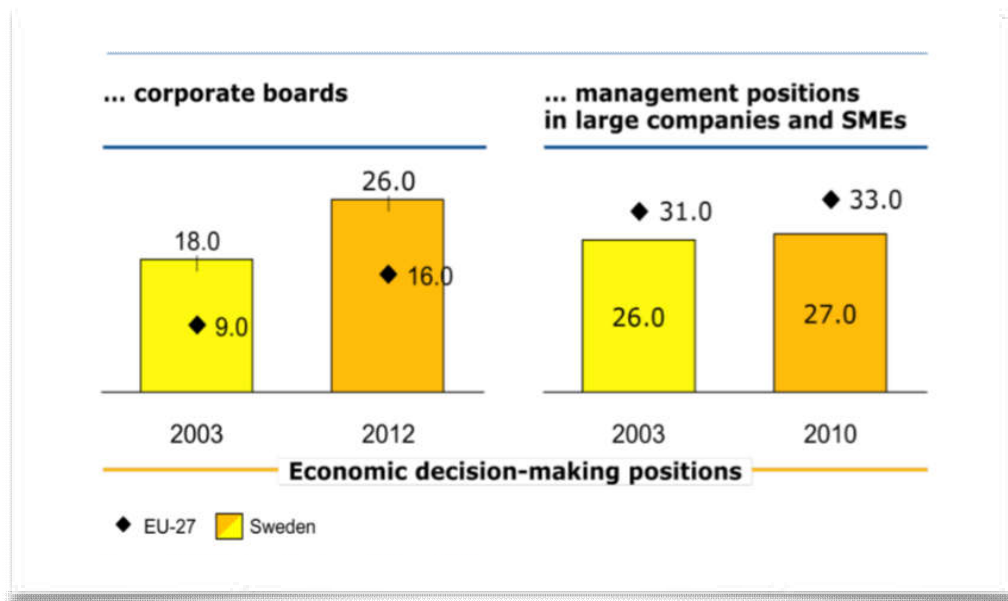


Source: Euro stat labour force Survey (LFS) (2013), Data from 2010, RB calculations

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

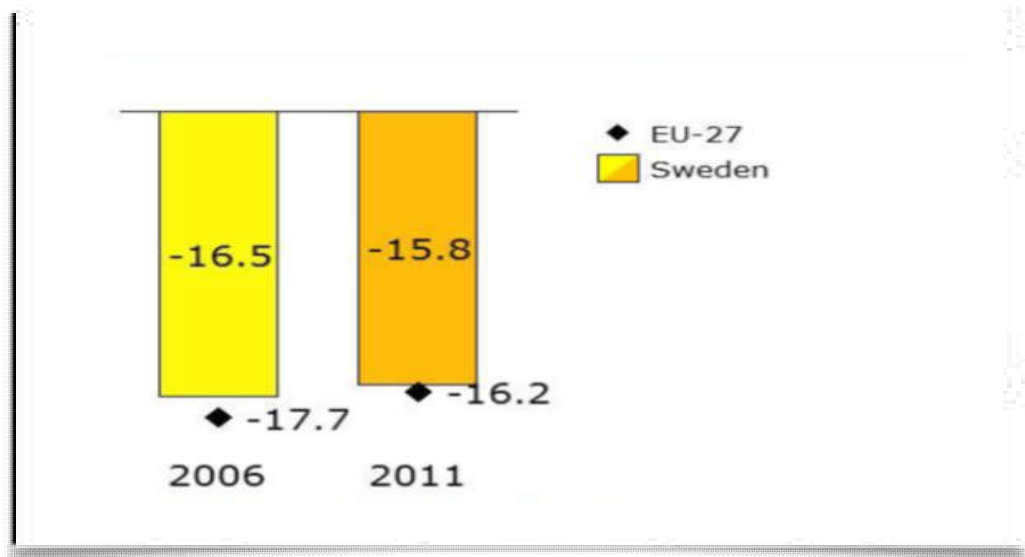
In Sweden, the average female employee earns 15.8% less than the average male employee which is slightly below the EU-27 average (16.2%). Between 2006 and 2010, a modest reduction of 0.7 pp can be observed.

Figure: 3.10 Women in Economic Decision-making Positions/the Vertical Segregation



Source: Euro stat labour force Survey (LFS) (2013), Data from 2010, RB calculations

Figure:3.11 Unadjusted gender pay gap



Source: Euro stat labour force Survey LFS 2013, (Data from 2011).

### 3.4 Various Gender Equality Initiatives

Many studies show that the labour market segregation in Sweden still exists due to some conservatory nature of institutions and companies that reinforce gender gaps. However, despite this, a series of public and private policy initiatives--legislative and non-legislative—(attached as Annexure) are being introduced in order to foster a conducive gender equal labour market. Policy initiatives like individual taxation, parental insurance, public childcare are already discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Alongside these policies there are some more initiatives the Swedish government has taken up in order to promote gender equality in Swedish labour market. They are mentioned below:

(i) *The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth* have been involved in promoting women's entrepreneurship as a policy priority since 1993. There are three government-initiated programmes run by this entity in order to support women's entrepreneurship- they are (i) Government's Ambassadors for Women's Entrepreneurship, (ii) Women's Entrepreneurship Programme, and (iii) the National

Programme for Developing Regional Resource Centres for Women. The overall goal of this agency is to increase the share of women's entrepreneurship up to 40% and to support equal opportunity for women as policy priorities of the government.<sup>164</sup>

The agency has targeted to promote women's entrepreneurship in the period 2007–2014 and therefore focuses on stimulating growth and competitiveness in Swedish Industry through women's participation. To this direction, it seeks to make business development more accessible to women who want to grow or start up a business; or develop an idea. For example, by developing entrepreneurship at universities and higher educational institution it promotes the Golden Rules of Leadership. This helps making women's entrepreneurship and its importance to the economy more visible.<sup>165</sup>

*Nutek* is a publicly funded consulting service and coaching programme for women entrepreneurs started in 1993 operated by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth. The initiative sought to revitalise declining unemployment rates particularly among women in rural areas through female consulting agency aiming to foster female entrepreneurship. Women in Sweden have been facing various problems in terms of initiating business like granting loans, negotiating with male advisors which negatively impact their entrepreneurial attitude. Hence, this initiative makes it convenient for women to have direct consulting service for them and explore their entrepreneurial skills; discuss and deliberate their issues and concerns without any feeling of being criticized or discriminated.

The initiative not only encouraged women to pursue their entrepreneurial skills, but also promote entrepreneurship in rural areas by involving potential female entrepreneurs to share their experience with the new ones. The set up provided its advice and support with financial and judicial hand, accounting and marketing and also provide access to networks. "Nutek's long-term objective is to develop universal consulting tools for female entrepreneurs which can be applicable irrespective of the region or country. The programme has a yearly budget of EUR 400000 to EUR 600000, whereas the national level contributes 25%, the regional level 50% and the

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<sup>164</sup> See OECD, 2012.

<sup>165</sup> <http://www.tillvaxtverket.se/sidhuvud/englishpages/promotingwomensentrepreneurship.4.5a5c099513972cd7fea35bf9.html>

municipal level 25% of funding'<sup>166</sup>. Between 1993 and 2009, around 1000 new businesses were established by women participating in Nutek'.<sup>167</sup>

(ii) *Guldnappen (Engl. The golden pacifier prize)*

In order to address the inequality between sexes in professional life, '*Guldnappen*' was initiated in 2003 by a trade union meant for private professionals containing around 65,000 member companies. It came into existence as a reaction to the situation where many union members were losing their jobs or had been discriminated while having parental leave.<sup>168</sup> Hence, the objective of this programme was to encourage companies to facilitate combination of parenting and working and to ensure a work-friendly environment for both men and women. The most important element of the project is to engage the wider public in this matter by sharing their opinion. This led employers to encourage its employees to take parental leave rather than discouraging them. The project therefore acted as a tool for facilitating equal opportunities.

The project closely investigates the workplace equality audits, annual wage survey, and equality plans of the organisations and scrutinise if all the companies or organisations fulfill the gender equality perspective. In addition, the companies are awarded on the basis of their performance on keeping gender equality intact in their organisational goal or agenda. Every year, *Guldnappen* introduces different theme to work with. For example: the theme of 2008 was to emphasis on the role of male employees in companies and in 2009 the theme was leadership etc.

Since its inception, *Guldnappen* has yielded remarkable results. For example, since 2003, when the initiative was started, the amount of nominees listed with it has increased steadily over the years and in 2009, it attracted most of the organisations and companies. The reason behind this success is considered to be laid in the way

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<sup>166</sup>The national level (Swedish Agency for Economy and Regional growth) is responsible for co-ordination; the regions contribute funding and the municipalities are responsible for operating the programme.

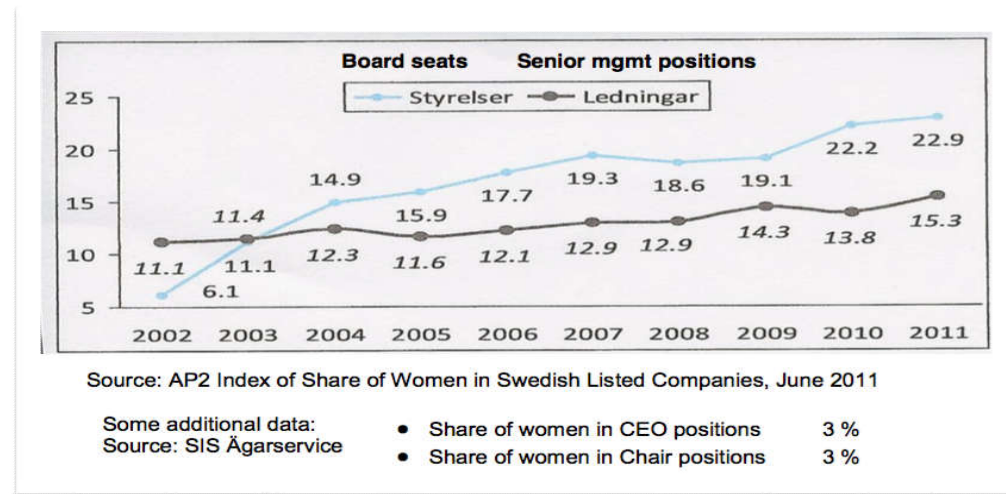
<sup>167</sup> See, OECD/The European Commission, 2014.

<sup>168</sup> Employers have a tendency to regard employees with children as an obstacle rather than an access.

management of the Union has been committed to gender equality. The project is said to have impacted a great number of companies.<sup>169</sup>

(iii) *The Swedish Corporate Governance Board* is a self-regulatory body which was set up in 1st July 2005 with the aim of promoting good corporate governance in Swedish stock exchange listed companies. Its prime role was to manage the Swedish Corporate Code Governance and monitor all the companies at the OMX Nordic Exchange Stockholm and NGM Equity. The Code has been revised and its application broadened over the years: “the code includes a rule stating that ‘an equal distribution among the sexes shall be the goal’” which is a voluntary rule. It is added by another obligatory rule which mandates for gender-equal composition of a board<sup>170</sup>. Although having the code in place for some years now, women are still far from being equally represented on company boards – according to a recent survey their share was 24.7% in 2014<sup>171</sup>. However, the effects of this obligatory rule of the Swedish Corporate Governance Code is nevertheless said to have great impact on increasing the number of female board members in listed companies over the time.

Figure: 3.12 Women in Swedish Listed Companies (%)



Source: AP2 Index of Share of Women in Swedish Listed Companies, June 2011.

<sup>169</sup> See for more details at [http://www.retepariopportunita.it/Rete\\_Pari\\_Opportunita/UserFiles/Vienna\\_5maggio2010/Annexes\\_gender\\_initiatives.pdf](http://www.retepariopportunita.it/Rete_Pari_Opportunita/UserFiles/Vienna_5maggio2010/Annexes_gender_initiatives.pdf).

<sup>170</sup> See for more details at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510011/IPOL\\_STU\(2015\)510011\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510011/IPOL_STU(2015)510011_EN.pdf)

<sup>171</sup> See for more details at <http://www.dagensjuridik.se/2014/06/andelen-kvinnor-i-bolagsstyrelser-okar-forsta-g...> - accessed 2015-01-23.

The diagram above shows the share of women in board seats in all the listed companies in Sweden. It increases consistently from 6.1% in 2002 to 22.9% in 2011. Simultaneously, the proportion for women in higher position also has grown at a remarkable pace from 11.1% to 15.3%. However, total share of women in top most positions in those companies remain very low only at 3%. This explains the fact that overall dramatic increase in share of women in Swedish companies has not been associated with a corresponding increase in women's share in leadership positions – a development which may lead to have a greater effect on gender equality.

Against the existing vertical segregation in various organisations *Swedish Corporate Governance Board* directed Swedish companies to make an artificial increase in the share of women on boards through mandatory quotas. Swedish listed companies have already made progress in this direction already completing half way towards an equal gender composition.

(iv) *The Equality Ombudsman 2009*<sup>172</sup>

It is a government agency formed in 2009 replacing the previous anti-discrimination Ombudsmen. Prior to that, Sweden had basically seven civil laws banning discrimination. The previous discrimination Act has been modified several times covering essential aspects like gender, ethnicity, religion, disability and sexual orientation. It has subsequently merged all the existing laws leading to shape the Comprehensive Discrimination Act in 2009. The four discrimination Ombudsmen were therefore merged into the Swedish Equality Ombudsman.

This Act is significant with respect to addressing gender inequality in the labour market. For example, “according to the Act all employers have a duty to undertake active measures to bring about equal rights and opportunities in the workplace regardless of sex, ethnicity and religion or other belief. This should be done in cooperation with the employees who are usually represented by their trade unions”. Moreover, there are separate provisions stating that all employers with 25 employees or more shall set up a gender equality plan and ensure that:

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<sup>172</sup> Up until 2009 there were four supervisory bodies related to various grounds; the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman (1980 ) dealing with gender, the Ombudsman against ethnic discrimination (1986), the Disability Ombudsman (1994) and the Ombudsman against discrimination due to sexual orientation (1999). See for more details at <https://heimatkunde.boell.de/2010/09/01/active-measures-sweden-theory-and-practice>.

“(i) the working conditions are suitable for all employees (irrespective of sex, ethnicity, religion or other belief); that (ii) both female and male employees combine employment and parenthood (irrespective of sex, ethnicity, religion or other belief); (iii) to prevent and hinder any employee being subjected to harassment or reprisals (irrespective of sex, ethnicity, religion or other belief); (iv) to ensure that people have the opportunity to apply for vacant positions (irrespective of sex, ethnicity, religion or other belief); (v) also to ensure an equal distribution of women and men in different types of works and employee categories (sex); and finally putting (vi) special efforts to achieve an equal distribution between men and women in all employee categories (sex)<sup>173</sup> .

Besides, the Act also looks into provisions and practices regarding pay and other terms of employment. Under this Act the companies have to draw up an action plan in every three year for equal pay (obligation applied with 25 or more employees in Organisation) including the result of the survey and analysis; indication of pay adjustments and other measures and a cost estimate and time table. A report on and evaluation of the above is also required to be included in the action plan. It also ensures that trade unions cooperate properly in the survey, analysis and with the action plan.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> See for more details at <https://heimatkunde.boell.de/2010/09/01/active-measures-sweden-theory-and-practice>

<sup>174</sup> The plan consists of about 100 initiatives that Swedish Government seeks to undertake for promoting gender equality within different policy areas. The action-plan is the result of a close and fruitful cooperation with all the ministers and government offices. All the Ministries had to be responsible for accomplishing the goals they have set out. Example: Ministry of Finance had made a gender analysis when evaluating the effects of tax-reforms. Since the beginning of the 1970's, Sweden applies separate income tax assessment, which means that women and men, husbands and wives, pay tax separately. This meant a lot for women's abilities to go into paid work during the 1970's. But since the situation differs for women and men in society, it is important to evaluate whether changes in the tax system have different effects for women and men respectively. The Ministry of Education also strengthens its efforts to implement a gender equality perspective in the education system at all levels. Basic education is the responsibility of local government in Sweden. One of the initiatives taken by the Ministry is to introduce training of people who will be able to serve in local government as experts on gender-issues. Their task will be to support local government in mainstreaming a gender equality perspective into its service-provision and to raise awareness among teachers about equality in relation to girls and boys in school. Further Ministry of Social Affairs also provided knowledge and awareness of gender equality in the health care system. The overall purpose was to make sure that women and men are treated equally in health care and social security. The action-plan therefore, gives the Government a comprehensive document, showing all the initiatives the Government is taking to promote gender equality.



### *3.5 Practice of Gender mainstreaming in Sweden*

Gender mainstreaming (1994) being a prime strategy of Swedish gender equality policy, has been closely intertwined with economic (labour market) and social (family) policies. The primary document for administering the process of gender mainstreaming in Sweden is 'Government Plan for Gender Mainstreaming' which span across 2004 till 2009. The document contains various conditions<sup>175</sup> for succeeding gender mainstreaming work. The overall goal of the plan is to make gender equality permeable of the whole of Government policy. All the ministries of Swedish government are coordinated to incorporate gender perspective into their policy areas<sup>176</sup>. This has made gender mainstreaming a highly prioritised element at the gender equality division.

In January 2005, the Swedish government appointed a committee of inquiry, 'Jamstod' (gender mainstreaming support), that is directed to support work and progress on gender mainstreaming in the government administration. 'Jamstod's responsibility in relation to the Government offices is to provide information about gender mainstreaming; to provide training<sup>177</sup> and develop methods for gender mainstreaming; and to create a forum for exchange of experiences pertaining to gender mainstreaming and related issues between public agencies.

In an 'Action Plan for Gender Equality'<sup>178</sup> presented to the Riksdag in May 2003, the Government decided to conduct gender equality analysis across policy areas identifying gender equality objectives and outcome indicators. The plan was also presented in the Government Bill on gender equality policy, which was finally adopted by the Riksdag in spring 2006. The gender analysis resulted into reflecting completely new objectives that mirror a strong gender equality perspective within

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<sup>175</sup> There is a long term plan, annual actions plans, and ministry-specific action plans as well.

<sup>176</sup> Every ministry has a contact person at the Gender Equality Division for gender mainstreaming work.

<sup>177</sup> The Government offices have put fundings and resources into such training because it is one of the most important prerequisite for effective implementation of gender mainstreaming.

<sup>178</sup> The Action plan is a step towards supporting and implementing Swedish Government's goals and vision in various policy areas. The Action Plan on for Gender equality directs all the policy areas to have done at least one gender equality analysis. As a matter of fact so far 120 gender equality analysis were carried out in 48 policy areas.

each policy area, and also in some cases formulation of existing objectives so as incorporate a better perspective on gender equality.

The strategy of gender mainstreaming has been very effective in maintaining gender equality within organisation. Before initiating gender mainstreaming at the organisational level, all the management and staff are given fundamental training on Swedish gender equality policy and framework as well as what gender mainstreaming implies. This follows with examining the conditions of the organisation with respect to the benefits of gender-equal activities and how useful it would be for the organisation to initiate gender equal operation and how it will affect its target groups. However, before embarking on a wider gender equality analysis, the management is required to study the gender equality measures already been implemented in the operation and whether that has helped enhancing gender equality within the organisation.

In the eventual stage, ‘the gender-equal operation’ method is used to create a shared idea of a gender-equal operation which reflects upon personal willingness to be a part of such operation. This leads to developing a strategy objective, planning and setting targets for gender mainstreaming. The last stage in the process contains impact analysis of the gender mainstreaming activities. The ‘Jämkart’ (Gender Equality Survey Analysis and Conclusions) method provides a rapid assessment of the impact operation or activity on gender equality. It also assesses how far the progress is being made towards achieving gender equality. The method also involves a forum that looks for suggestions and comments which can then be included in the gender mainstreaming action plan.<sup>179</sup> Thus, the strategy of gender mainstreaming takes a route through formulation, planning, assessment and evaluation of gender policy plan of any organisation.

There are prerequisite factors that led to the development and implementation of the strategy of gender mainstreaming in Sweden. According to Council of Europe (1998)<sup>180</sup>, there are some preconditions that are required to be fulfilled in order to process an effective implementation of gender mainstreaming like:

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<sup>179</sup><http://www.government.se/contentassets/3d89b0f447ec43a4b3179c4a22c370e8/gender-mainstreaming-manual-sou-200715>

<sup>180</sup> For more information please see <http://www.unhcr.org/3c160b06a.pdf>

(i) existence of a specific gender equality policy with national goals; (ii) the political will of the government to implement gender mainstreaming; (iii) availability of sex-segregated statistics to analyse gender impact assessment; (iv) gender equality knowledge and training programs in the administration in which gender mainstreaming is to be implemented; (v) financial means and reallocation of existing resources.

There has been a presence of a strong gender equality policy in Sweden which promotes equality between women and men and their equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities as a matter of human rights and social justice. In addition to this, there is a strong commitment at the political level about complying with the norms of gender equality policy. Various political parties along with elected representatives and their corresponding ministries share a common vision towards bringing greater gender equality and follow all the directives in a more strict manner. All the ministries and elected representative coordinate with each other to incorporate gender perspective into their policy areas. Every ministry has a contact person at the Gender Equality Division for gender mainstreaming work. Gender mainstreaming is therefore, highly prioritised at the gender equality division in the Swedish government.

Another factor that contributes to the effective implementation is the presence of gender training courses among the administrators so as to incorporate gender perspective into the policy making levels and Sweden is found to be having such tools to improve the understanding of the administration. One such example is SALAR that offers gender training courses to the civil servants at the local and regional level in Sweden. These trainings aim at mainstreaming gender into decision-making activities, municipalities, county councils and private companies. Overall, SALAR's programme has provided such training courses for 66.000 civil servants until 2013 (EIGE, 2013a).

Such trainings are also provided by the National Secretariat for Gender Research (NSGR) at the University of Gothenburg for administrative staff at the State level. Over the period from 2008-2010, more than 2000 staff members of the ministries took part in conferences, workshops, seminars or summer school on a voluntary basis (ibid.). In 2007, SEK 125 million (€ 13.3 million) were granted to SALAR to target efforts to develop Gender Mainstreaming in county councils and municipalities. Additional SEK 13 million (€ 1.3 million) were given to the NSGR to further develop

Gender Mainstreaming methods in 2008 (Government of Sweden, 2009). Besides this, there is this method called the '3R- method' which is based on:

“systematisation of Swedish experience of work on gender equality that helps in incorporating gender equality considerations into the work of local authorities (COE, 2004). The idea behind this method is a systematic review of men’s and women’s representation in different places and positions, of the distribution and of utilisation of resources and of the question why goods, services and situations are as they are (COE, 2004; Pettersson, 2004b)”.

The presence of active labour market policies as well as well defined social policies also contribute to a large extent in the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming. In Sweden, labour market policies are aligned with directives of gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming provisions that help to fulfill the ‘institutionalised’ commitment to full employment“ (Sainsbury, 1996: 32). For example: In 2009, a written communication to the Swedish parliament stressed the importance to coordinate and develop gender equality measures targeting working life, business, education and social policy. A total of SEK 235 million ( $\approx$  € 25 million) was provided for these measures (Government of Sweden, 2009). All these prerequisite factors therefore contribute to a large extent in the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming. The consistency between the written commitments from the highest political level and the activities carried out in the governmental organisations further make it convenient although with some loopholes.

Besides these, there are other elements which are also essential part of gender-mainstreaming like gender-budgeting and gender-differentiated statistics. Gender budgeting is declared in the 2014 Declaration of Government as an essential part of gender mainstreaming and is being introduced as a new technique in the formulation of State budget. In realising the goal of gender equality, the budget process and budget Bill are very essential as it includes the effects and consequences for gender equality when taking decisions on the direction and distribution of resources at the preliminary level of governance. A gender-responsive budgeting entails the application of the principle of gender mainstreaming in the budget process which further enables evaluating budget policy and gender equality effects; integrating the gender equality perspective at all levels of the budget process and redistributing revenue and expenditure to promote gender equality. Thus gender-responsive budgeting ensures to make gender equality an integral part in the policy making

process.<sup>181</sup> It also offers alternative solutions if necessary, so as to ultimately choose the alternative that best contributes to equality between women and men<sup>182</sup>.

A system of gender-segregated statistics contributes largely towards making differential treatment for men and a woman and its effects visible. The Swedish Bureau of Statistics provides such statistics on a broad basis, and since 1984 it has published a yearly booklet on Swedish gender equality in figures and has a special web-page for gender equality.

All these initiatives to bring transformation in gender relations within family and in the labour market have been in place since long in Sweden. Sweden has been constantly innovative and keeps bringing new initiatives to promote gender equality. Some of the recent events/steps are mentioned below reflecting this spirit.

- (i) The new proposition of the EU commission on maternity leave which is to make it compulsory for women-regardless of their wishes and would therefore ban them from working- is being critically opposed in Sweden on the ground that, the directive is problematic as it only mentions mothers as parents which is risking the Swedish gender equality agenda. What Sweden wants is to encourage parents share both the parental leave and responsibility for their children. What it wants is Europe to have more egalitarian dads<sup>183</sup>.
- (ii) A group of Swedish pupils sought to exchange dresses meant for men and women. Although the students at the high school in Ronneby in Southern Sweden came up with this idea of cross dressing as part of fun game in the annual photo shot event, but they ended launching this event as something of a political campaign on social media after their teacher had shown objection for such cross dressing. However, it sparked a debate across Sweden as part of gender equality practice<sup>184</sup>.
- (iii) From festivals to sports games, several organisers who are seeking public funding to marketise their events in Sweden's capital now need to submit their company's gender

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<sup>181</sup> See for more details at <http://www.government.se/articles/2015/11/gender-responsive-budgeting/>

<sup>182</sup> See for more details at <http://www.government.se/articles/2015/11/efforts-for-gender-equality-are-prioritised/>

<sup>183</sup> See for more details <http://www.thelocal.se/20100225/25216>

<sup>184</sup> See for more details at <http://www.thelocal.se/20150824/cross-dressing-pupils-cause-stir-at-rural-school>.

policies. This is part of new rules designed to make Stockholm the best city in the world for women to do business<sup>185</sup>.

- (iv) The hospital in Stockholm, 'Södersjukhuset', which is already the largest emergency care unit in the Nordic region specially meant for women, and girls who have been sexually assaulted in the city (it treats between 600 and 700 patients a year), now has opened an emergency department especially for male rape victims. This step is remarkable example of practicing gender mainstreaming approach<sup>186</sup>
- (v) Recently almost all the corporate firms are asked to comply with the legal provision keeping more female members in the board of the company, failure to which they would face heavy penalty. According to the new proposed legislation, all the Swedish companies need to ensure that board of directors should have 40 % female representation. This warning comes off in the wake of the government plan to introduce a quota law to ensure companies have a greater representation of women on their boards. Gender Equality Minister, Asa Regnér, hold that there is gender balance bill coming up during 2017 for initiating further transformation in the gender system<sup>187</sup>.
- (vi) The Swedish Armed Forces are determined to have a 'gender advisor' in every regiment by 2016, as part of an ambitious action plan to help the military develop its gender policies. "We have a direct order from the government to integrate equality into our work. And as the organisation whose job it is to defend our nation in the event of an attack, women's rights concern us very much. The job of the military as an organisation is to defend our democratic values, so it is important that we live up to that."<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> See for more details at <http://www.thelocal.se/20150204/stockholm-events-get-gender-equal-funding-rules>.

<sup>186</sup> See for more details at <http://www.thelocal.se/20150617/sweden-announces-first-centre-for-raped-men>.

<sup>187</sup> See for more details at <http://www.thelocal.se/20150515/employ-more-women-or-else-swedish-companies-told>.

<sup>188</sup> See for more details at <http://www.thelocal.se/20150220/swedish-army-appoints-gender-advisors>.

### **3.6 Conclusion:**

The chapter looks into various policy instruments of Swedish welfare state and analyses how the gender equality perspective is being incorporated through policy initiatives in order to ensure gender equality in distribution of resources, rights and responsibilities. Socio economic policies like parental leave system, individual taxation system and public child care system along with various other public and private initiatives show a great deal of gender equality orientation in their approaches. Alongside the rooted socio-cultural factors, the presence of strong welfare commitments of Swedish governments as well as consensus among political and civil society groups fed with a feminist scholarship on gender equality and its various aspects within family and labour market set the ground for developing a strong policy discourse on gender equality in Sweden. All these become prerequisite factors in institutionalising gender mainstreaming strategy in Sweden. From the small unit of society-the family-to the labour market; to various public and private institutions, the Swedish gender equality policy implements the values and objectives of gender mainstreaming.

### Sweden as a Model for the European Union

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#### 4.1 Background

The issue of gender equality for a long time been significantly associated with Nordic welfare states and Sweden among its Nordic counterparts topped the list in most of global indices with respect to promoting gender equality and its desired outcome. According to World Economic forum's 'Global Gender Gap 2014' report,<sup>189</sup> Sweden ranks fourth in the world for achieving gender equality. In 2014, it topped in the list with respect to women attaining political success and increasing women's role in technical and professional roles. According to Social Progress Index, Sweden holds second place in the world with respect to registering a great progress in availing 'basic human needs', 'foundations for wellbeing', and 'opportunity.'<sup>190</sup> While it does not lead the world on any individual dimensions in the report, it ranks 3rd on 'foundation of well being' (86.43), 5th in terms of 'opportunity' (82.93) and 8th on 'basic human needs' (94.83).<sup>191</sup>

Besides, its consistent progress on Human Development and Gender Development Indices shows a remarkable effort Sweden has made throughout. As discussed in the previous chapter, Sweden has been proactively involved in achieving gender equality objective since 1970s through various policy instruments that have substantially influenced gender relations within family and outside. Although there are still existing

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<sup>189</sup> "The Global Gender Gap 2014 aims to understand whether countries are distributing their resources and opportunities equitably between women and men, irrespective of their overall income levels. It measures the size of the gender inequality gap in economic participation and opportunity (such as in salaries and leadership), education, political empowerment, health and in survival rate in terms of life expectancy and sex ratio"-Available at <http://www.thelocal.se/20141028/sweden-remains-fourth-best-for-gender-equality>

<sup>190</sup> The Social Progress Index measures progress on three dimensions: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing, and Opportunity. Each dimension is made up of four equally-weighted individual components scored on a scale from 0 to 100. Higher score means higher social progress, and lower reflects the reverse. The scale is determined by identifying the best and worst global performance on each indicator by any country since 2004, which is further used to set the maximum (100) and minimum (0) bounds. Thus, the scaling of Social Progress Index score allows the tracking of absolute performance that can be compared across peers, rather than comparing through abstract, relative measures.

<sup>191</sup> See for more details at <http://www.socialprogressimperative.org/data/spi/findings>



gaps, but Sweden has been consistent in its direction and motivation for bringing greater gender equality in its society.

The prime objective of gender equality which Swedish model promotes through its gender equality policy and political commitments is firmly intertwined with various social and economic policies along with institutional practices. The Swedish gender equality policy takes on a new gender discourse that promotes for 'equality of outcome' instead of limiting itself to the principle 'equality of opportunity', thus forming a distinct gender equality model different from other European countries and the EU.

The ideas of Swedish gender equality are being laid down in the official document of Swedish government. According to the fact sheet of Ministry of Integration and gender Equality, Sweden:

“Swedish Government’s gender equality policy has two principal aims: to combat and transform systems that preserve the gender-based distribution of power and resources in society, and to ensure that women and men enjoy the same power and opportunities to shape their own lives. When they share power and influence in all aspects of community life, the result is a more fair and democratic society” (Government of Sweden, 2009).

The significant elements of the Swedish gender equality policy are individual freedom over rights and responsibilities, redistribution of resources and power, and most importantly the involvement of men in gender equality framework-the effort to make this possible is what makes Sweden unique about its approach towards gender equality.

While an extensive participation of women into the labour market had been taken place across Europe, only a few European countries sought to balance their paid work and care work together, thus enabling women’s economic independence and productivity in the labour market as well as unloading their double burden at home. However, Sweden went a step further and introduced a new gender policy discourse in which men are now considered to be an equal participant in caring and household responsibilities. Men become an ‘agent of change’ in transforming gender role

relations within family. A recent ‘Work life Survey’<sup>192</sup>, on 8000 Swedes shows, “that as many as 62% men are prepared to give up their careers for a couple of years in favour of their partners, while only 39% of women could consider doing the same. Among those born in 1940s and 1950s, as many as 70% could consider easing off at work to support their partners.”<sup>193</sup> This survey indicates a new attitude among Swedish men who contributes to gender equality in a positive manner.

While there has been a wide range of literature dealing with social and economic development across the world, what brings a new outlook to this development approach in recent times is its approach towards inclusive development and the inclusion of gender approach in the development process. The concern for such inclusion is felt more seriously as ‘there is convincing evidence, including UNDP’s own work which shows that countries with greater levels of gender equality are better able to protect the hard-won gains of human development from being eroded and undermined by the crisis (UNDP 2013 HDRO).’<sup>194</sup> Investments on gender equality pay off for the country as a whole in the future. Unlike 90s, when there were arguments that people must be at the centre of development efforts and not markets, today there is a better understanding that economic growth does not automatically trickle down and improve the condition and position of women’s lives. Hence, there has been a wider agreement to emphasis the interconnections between gender equality and different components of development. And Sweden has been always a pioneer in upholding this discourse.

To bring a change in the previous ‘equality framework’ Sweden introduced the concept of gender mainstreaming.<sup>195</sup> Although gender mainstreaming was originated within the development framework, Sweden has incorporated the values and elements of gender mainstreaming within its policy discourse and has implemented it through various social and economic policies: “gender equality is perceived as a government

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<sup>192</sup> The Manpower Work Life survey is the largest labour market database in Sweden. It delineates various aspects of Swedish life like attitudes to work and pay along with other significant aspects of life. The database houses around 20,000 people coming from various sections of Swedish society.

<sup>193</sup> See for more details at <http://www.thelocal.se/20101031/29928>

<sup>194</sup> Cited in UNDP 2015.

<sup>195</sup> Gender-mainstreaming changes the way previous gender equality framework works in which gender problem often resembles women issue and therefore gender equality seem to be a matter of providing supplementary benefits to women or offering positive actions in order to uplift their status. However, gender-mainstreaming made a shift and focused on accommodating interests of both men and women and their experiences and formulated strategies accordingly in the way to achieve gender equality.

mandate, which must be given consideration in every policy field (Gender Mainstreaming approach). In addition to the responsibility of every government body to execute gender equality, specific gender equality institutions play a vital role in implementing governmental gender equality and anti-discrimination policy: the minister, gender equality department, the office of the Ombudsperson and various others (in part, temporary commissions/advisory boards). Gender equality policy is also institutionally entrenched at municipal and regional administration level.”<sup>196</sup>

Whilst the success of Swedish gender equality policy and the gender mainstreaming strategy have been extensively discussed in the scholarly domain, emulating or adopting Swedish model of gender equality or practicing Swedish gender mainstreaming strategy at the European Union level or across European countries has received relatively less attention. Hence, the presumed questions that this chapter seeks to address are: (I) what is the Swedish model of gender equality? (ii) What are the unique features of this model or what are the elements of gender equality policy in Sweden which gives it a shape of a model? (iii) To what extent Swedish model of gender equality can be emulated at the EU level or by the other European countries? (iv) What are the opportunities and challenges may come in way to the achieve gender equality? The key objective of this chapter therefore is to explore the socio-cultural, economic and political aspects of Swedish society which helped in developing a progressing gender equality model.

While the quintessential native features in Sweden dramatically influenced the gender system, the commitment of Swedish welfare state towards its citizens also has been a motivating factor for developing such a gender just culture. Besides looking into the inherent characteristics of Swedish society, this chapter takes the insights of Ronald Inglehart and Christian Wezel reflected in the model of ‘cultural map of the world’ in order to understand the unique position of Sweden with respect to its progressive attitude towards gender equality issues. The complex nature of the EU governance and its competencies are also discussed so as to explore various ways and means through which Swedish discourse on gender equality can possibly interact with EU institutional means in order to get it emulated at the EU level. This helps in exploring what are the actors, institutions are involved at the EU level while transferring or

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<sup>196</sup> For more details see <http://www.gwi-boell.de/web/eu-countries-comparison-gender-politics-country-comparison-sweden-4321.html>

exporting gender equality model and what are the domestic bottlenecks which hinder the process.

Exploration of Nordic features and characteristics is essential in delineating Swedish model on gender equality as it constitutes and reflect an integral part of Nordic life. An overview on Nordic model and its features therefore contributes to the discussion on Swedish society and its socio-cultural prerogatives that led to shaping Swedish Model.

#### **4.2. The Unique Nordic Model: Sweden in Focus**

The legacy of Sweden with respect to dealing extensively with a progressive yet radical perspective towards gender equality has its origin in the way Swedish society and economy has developed. Also being a part of the remarkable Nordic group.<sup>197</sup>, Sweden has been thoroughly influenced by and shared experiences with its fellow Nordic states. The discussion on Swedish model requires a substantial analysis of how the Nordic model has evolved over the time with respect to a unique gender paradigm and how it influenced the entire Europe along with Sweden.

The existence of a unique Nordic model presupposes an analysis of its historical conditions and the way Nordic welfare states emerged and flourished over the decades. Historically, the Nordic countries have been the late comers in the industrialisation process in Europe and they were in many ways stood on the outskirts of western culture, which substantially differentiate the Nordic countries from rest of Europe. The regions that became the Nordic countries also have harsh environment like long winters and were able to support only a sparse population. This was the situation in Sweden as well. As a matter of fact the evolution of unique gender relations in Nordic countries including Sweden also has its root in how Western civilisation developed over the time.

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<sup>197</sup> “Nordic Nations remain the most gender-equal societies in the world. Last year’s leading four nations – Iceland (1), Finland (2), Norway (3) and Sweden (4) – are joined by Denmark, which climbs from eighth place to fifth” (Global Gender Report, 2014: World Economic Forum).

After the fall of Roman Empire, the Western culture was predominantly run by feudalism which created a feudal pyramid featured with extremely unequal distribution of wealth, power and privileges enjoyed by the ecclesiastical group. A church in those days intent on amassing wealth and reinforced the social construction of gender as an ideological system and thus sexuality of women was seen as a possible threat to the existing social order. The sexuality of women was used against women to control them socially. This is because the sexuality is perceived in terms of evil influence on women. However, the pattern in the Nordic countries differed. As Nordic countries were at the outskirts of the Western culture, they did not come under the rule of Roman Empire, which provided them an edge over other European countries and they were Christianised very late. Also these Nordic countries had the subsistence economy and had the largest agglomerations of urban set up dependent only on a few thousand inhabitants who were in the agriculture. With the partial exception of Denmark, all the Nordic countries could not manage to earn a surplus economy which could be expropriated by a ruling feudal class. Therefore, there was more of poverty than richness and development in these neighbouring counterparts (Bo Lewin, 2008)<sup>198</sup>

All these factors remarkably influenced in the way these societies perceive their women. “The sexuality of women was seen as less of a threat to the social order. Rather the fecundity of women was important. It was not so much the fear of illegitimate heirs that governed societal norms, but rather the fear of not having offspring to assist on the family farm was a matter of concern. Thus female virginity never became an issue of such magnitude as in the case of more civilised parts of Europe. On the contrary, unmarried cohabitation was common in Nordic countries including Sweden. Women were more important as fellow workers than as kept, non-working objects<sup>199</sup>.”

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<sup>198</sup> See for more details at [http://www.psykologtidsskriftet.no/?seks\\_id=52301&a=2](http://www.psykologtidsskriftet.no/?seks_id=52301&a=2)

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

#### ***4.2.1 Origin of Nordic Model:***

Since 1980s, the term 'Nordic or Scandinavian model' gained popularity through a number of comparative studies of welfare states. The term 'Nordic model' became first notable in the works of Gosta-Esping- Andersen (1990). In his 'Three worlds of welfare capitalism,' Esping Andersen had identified a Nordic welfare State in which rights and benefits of citizens were universal in nature. His referring of the Nordic model as a unique one therefore made it indispensable for researchers on social policy and welfare state in all time.

There are varied opinions regarding the term 'Nordic model'. Neo liberals and old Marxists usually have a cynical view towards the presence of a Nordic model, while social democrats more gladly bring out a strongly positive perspective on Nordic welfare discourse. There is a strong political consensus within the Nordic countries over the application of 'Nordic model' to the extent that in that political parties usually compete for the 'ownership' of the kind of political system and welfare state that the concept seems to denote. The concept is often considered as broad, vague and ambiguous, yet is helpful for observers who study multifarious nature of market oriented welfare democracies (Leibfried & Mau 2008). However, it is also believed that there is no such thing as 'Nordic model' and that political system or welfare states simply do not come in type (Ringen, 1991).

#### ***4.2.2 Various Features of Nordic Model***

The Nordic model is significant for its extensive prevalence of state welfare arrangements. The Scandinavian states have a long historical root and there is a strong correlation between the states and the people. The implication is not that the state send "rain and sunshine from above" (Marx 1852) but rather 20th century state acts as a "peaceful battleground of different classes assuming an important function of 'an agency through which society can be reformed'" (Korpi, 1978: 48). What makes it unique is a presence of uniform and integrated institutions directed to provide welfare benefits to most of its citizen minimising and the class conflicts. The element of class

compromise has been a significant factor in the making of this type of Nordic welfare state.

In the Nordic model, the linkage between the centre and the local level was mostly organised, therefore the interaction between the decision makers and people became intimate and intensive. Unlike the Anglo-American countries, where difference between public and private is so crucial, it holds less significance for the Scandinavian countries<sup>200</sup>. For example, until recently it has been considered legitimate for the state to collect and publish records of individual citizen. It is probably no accident that Sweden and Finland have the oldest populations statistics in the world” (Allardt, 1986:111).

A significant feature is the principle of ‘Universalism.’<sup>201</sup> ‘In the Nordic countries universal social rights is extended to the whole population irrespective of class differences. This character was initiated at the time of political and economic modernisation of the Scandinavian countries. The Scandinavian/Nordic model of class structure<sup>202</sup> represents a strong position of the peasantry, the working position of the landlords, and the accessibility of working class to the parliamentary system and to labour market negotiations. Nordic model is also famous for its minimum gender differences<sup>203</sup> as well as public supporting system for childcare and care of the old and disabled people and also for higher rate of women's employment. That the relatively high welfare benefits, the extensive public services and women’s better position in the labour market made various researchers agree on the fact that Scandinavian men are ‘emancipated from the tyranny of labour market and Scandinavian women are emancipated from the tyranny of the family. Not only growth and efficiency featured the goals of Nordic model, but this model also stood to promote the values for social

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<sup>200</sup> The term Nordic and Scandinavia are used interchangeably.

<sup>201</sup> Nordic countries provide social benefits and other public services on a more universal basis irrespective of class and gender than elsewhere in Europe.

<sup>202</sup> Formation of Scandinavian class structure was due to the rise of independent peasant class as a result of the individualisation of agriculture and very peaceful agrarian revolution. This individualisation of agriculture was invented by the king itself which weakened the nobility leading to the collapse of Swedish empire and development of eventual progress in Nordic countries in expanding the capitalist world economy. As the Nordic economy was mostly export oriented, it gave space for export industries to flourish which to some extent hinder growth of urban slums. Therefore, the class movements in the early Sweden consisted of industrial workers and a rural proletariat. Three polar class structure namely the upper class, working class and peasant class, were emerged at the end of the century in the absence of ethnic and religious cleavages and dominated accordingly.

<sup>203</sup> “The gender differences play a lesser role in the Nordic countries than in other parts of the advanced world” (Sainsbury 1999; Lewis 1992).

justice, human rights and equality. The political and welfare construction of the Nordic model was rooted in equalisation of life chances, social justice, social security, social cohesion and stability. All of which is in various ways related not only to the economic growth, climate investments etc. but also to political preferences, ideologies, interests and values' (Kuhnle *et al.* 2003).

These values are reflected through the way Nordic model had designed social and economic policies for women and their counterparts: "Among European welfare states, the Scandinavian countries are the most 'women-, family- and child-friendly'" (Hernes 1978; Esping-Anderson 1999). The lives of women and their respective position in Nordic societies as well as supporting institutional mechanism for reinforcing values of gender equality have been largely administered through a well coordinated relationship between state-market and the family. The welfare institutions in Nordic countries treated women as independent citizens and provide their social rights irrespective of their background, unlike those countries in which women are not given such status and are entitled to welfare and social benefits based on their relationship to their husbands and marital status: "Independence in relations to men, high labour market participation, and an extensive public sector, including a publicly organised sector for childcare, characterised the position of women in the present Nordic countries" (Leira 1993, Sainsbury 1996, Korpi 2000).

Nordic policies are meant to promote women and men's labour force participation along with their caring responsibility. In the Nordic countries today, women's labour market participation is almost the same as men's, and women constitute from one-third to one-half of Nordic parliamentary assemblies and governments, and their strong position in all areas of society is facilitated by public care services (Christiansen and Markkola, 2006). Esping-Andersen (1999) has rightly associated the relatively better degree of high fertility rates and economic productivity of the Nordic countries with the public childcare or other initiatives of Nordic States. The elements of high fertility rates together with supporting public system and involvement of men in the traditional gender roles seem to yield wonders and constitute specific characteristics of the Nordic countries of today (Christiansen and Amark, 2006).



Unlike its European counterparts that supported the traditional family model, Nordic countries adopted the dual breadwinner system in which women's household work and caring responsibility is considered productive work and husband and wife equally contributed to a complementary unit of production. A new perspective towards family policy emerged in the Nordic countries which were largely inspired by Sweden. It was during 1930s when Alva Myrdal and other social thinkers reiterating the theoretical discussions taking place across the world regarding married women's right to paid work, and argued for working women's right to motherhood (Haave *et. al* 2006: 205-6). Accordingly, in the Swedish governmental commission report, a new idea of a 'brand new family' was introduced- a family where society had taken over responsibilities for childcare, leaving both spouses free to gainfully employment' (Ibid.). Until now the imminent problem of declining birth rate which was a matter of serious concern across Scandinavia, seem to be tackled by the idea of this concept of brand new family put forth by the Swedish experts.

The family policies of the Nordic region gave freedom of choices to both men and women - in other words, a 'gender-encompassing right to provide and to care'. This new perspective got institutionalised through political commitments and agendas. However, there were little variations between these Nordic partners in terms of care policies and gender equality visions. For instance, Danish care policies have been based on a universal dual breadwinner model whereas Swedish polices have more consistently embraced gender equality and therefore not only furthered a universal-breadwinner model, but also took a step towards a universal dual caregiver vision. Norwegian care policies on the other hand have been marked by ambivalence concerning the gainful employment of mothers without considering the need for public child care services.

Another aspect which made Nordic countries radically different from their European counterparts is the way unmarried mothers are being perceived here. Unmarried mother's status of being a sinner is not much valued, rather offender becomes the father of illegitimate child. Almost all the Nordic countries bring reforms aiming at disciplining fathers to take responsibility for the maintenance of 'illegitimate'

children. As a matter of fact, the term ‘illegitimate child’ has been abolished in Sweden and any child born outside wedlock obtained equal rights as children born in wedlock.<sup>204</sup>

In spite of its progress on gender equality discourse, there is also a paradoxical situation exist in the Nordic model. While women are highly concentrated in Nordic countries, there is higher segregation in the labour market with respect to its horizontal and vertical hierarchy. Even if Nordic men take more responsibility for household chores, including care for children, than their European counterparts, women are still responsible for the main part of work and care in the home (Bonke, 1995). This has given rise to varied interpretation of Nordic gender equality model. However, despite differences over opinion, there are few quintessential features which still made Nordic model a unique one. For example, marriage legislation in Nordic countries is different from rest of European countries. The marriage legislation in Europe usually make husband the sole earner of the family and stated his guardianship over his wife and children. But the Nordic marriage legislation recognised married women as individuals in their own rights. It gave married women in Nordic countries the freedom to choose waged work irrespective of their husband’s will and in practice many wives, especially in poor working-class families, are engaged in part time (Amark *et. al* 2006). Further, the individual tax policy is also a unique feature of Nordic model: “instead of taxing families, Nordic countries tax each family members independently which means the incentives for both partners to work is higher as compared to the Continental welfare model” (Kangas & Palme 2005: 36).

Moreover, statistics show a phenomenal increase in women’s labour market participation in the Nordic countries as compare to their European counterparts. The following table indicates the consistent growth in the female labour force participation since 1960’s. Overall there was an upward trend with respect to female labour force participation in the Nordic countries, particularly; Sweden has registered the maximum increase in the participation of women in the labour force with just 36.3% female labour force in the 1960 to 78.2%, in 2007, the highest among all the Nordic Countries.

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<sup>204</sup> Interview with Prof. Jean Traust at the Department of Sociology, University of Uppsala, Sweden, April 2014.

Table 4.1: Labour Force Participation of Women in different European Welfare States (1960-2007).

Year	1960	1974	1980	1990	2000	2007
Denmark	43.5	63.2	71.9*	77.6	75.9	76.4
Finland	65.6	65.5	69.4	73.4	72.1	73.9
Norway	50.1	50.0	62.2	70.7	76.5	76.5
Sweden	36.3	64.9	75.3	82.5	76.4	78.2
Nordic Countries (average)	48.9	60.9	69.7	76.1	75.3	76.3
Continental Europe	42.1	45.2	46.9*	53.0	61.7	66.7
Southern Europe	31.6	37.6	40.7*	47.1	53.2	59.2
United Kingdom	46.1	54.3	61.7*	67.3	68.9	69.8

*Source: 1960–1974: OECD (1997) Historical Statistics 1960–1995 (p.41). 1980–2007: OECD Annual Labour Force Statistics. OECD. Stat. Statistics Database: Labour Force Statistics, LFS by Sex and Age - Indicators: <http://stats.oecd.org> (April 17, 2009)*

Besides, gender equality aspect, another striking feature of this Nordic model is its nature of governance. The governance in Nordic countries draws its political legitimacy through collective decision making process. The governance ensures that any political decision needs to be made in consensus with civil society organisation alongside parliament, governments and trade unions. This system is called ‘consensual governance’<sup>205</sup> and this consensual style of Nordic politics is said to be the reason behind the popular usage of geographical adjective ‘Nordic’. More than all the internal factors, what is working as a glue-stick for these countries to be together

<sup>205</sup> Consensus-making is an important element of Nordic politics because of presence of coalition governments in these countries. This kind of coalition draws on political decisions made through advance consultation with each other which very often leads to even political compromises.

is the Nordic Council which seeks to maintain mutual cooperation and internal comparison within Nordic politics. This cooperation between Nordic countries has been there even before the First World War, just a few years after the dissolution of the union between Norway and Sweden. The last but not the least significant feature is its strong political democracy and a culture of Protestantism which gave a boost up to the Nordic model with respect to holding a unique gender equality framework. “Protestantism more than social democracy, shaped universalism and the Nordic model of welfare” (Knudsen, 2000).<sup>206</sup> Over the years, Family law and gender relations stood out as issues of the highest priority for the Nordic countries. “Gender relations was an area where efforts to harmonise the legal framework were distinctive, indicating that gender equality is one of the most prominent hallmarks of the Nordic model” (Kari Melby, Anna-Birte Ravn, Christina Carlsson Wetterberg, 2009).

**4.2.3 Understanding Swedish model:** Like its other Nordic counterparts, the socio-economic condition in Sweden was almost similar which in a way led to set a pattern in which sexuality of women is never a concern. According to Professor Bo Lewin (2014)<sup>207</sup>:

“the peculiarities of the Nordic experience are that we Nordic natives tend to forget that we are deviants. Our way of perceiving and socially organising sexuality is not given by nature but by historical circumstances. It is not the way of the world. It is not even the dominant way of modern industrialised Western society”.

This gives an outlook on how sexuality in Sweden has been perceived in a way that differs from other European countries. The deviant nature of Swedish society is resulted from a long historical process and has been significantly shaped by two cultural traits- (i) the culture of a tendency towards equality and a (ii) tendency to favour rationality. This research study holds that it was the socio-cultural factors that has helped quite remarkably in forming such progressive yet radical perspective towards gender equality in Sweden and which is exotic, tempting and liberated. Also, the economic and political set up along with a presence of strong feminist debates contributed to a large extent to strengthen this perspective.

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<sup>206</sup> Cited in Melby Kari *et. al.*2009: 4.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with Prof. Bo Lewin at Department of Sociology, Uppsala University, Sweden, 22 May 2014.

Following are some of the features and characteristics of Sweden that can be considered as significant factors in shaping Swedish model on gender equality.

#### ***4.2.4 The Nature of gender relations in Sweden:***

There are various indicators that reflect Sweden's deviant nature which led to develop quite open gender relationship. With the advent industrialisation and modernisation in the 19th century, and Sweden overcoming its adverse rural economy leading to huge industrial restructuring, unmarried cohabitation became common among Swedish couples: Between 1966 and 1972 the marriage rate in Sweden dropped 40%, and the future of nuclear family was speculated to be threatened. The enormous drop in the marriage rate led to approve the nature of cohabitation. As this transitional period did not consider marriage as essential, the Church and the State did not put many restrictions on those couples who sought to form consensual unions without marriage. Although open sexuality was accepted in adolescence and outside marriage, but it was strictly regulated with an emphasis on companionship and fidelity for both spouses in marriage.

The deviant nature of sexuality in Swedish culture makes it different from the mainstream discourse of the contemporary western industrialised culture. To refer its deviant nature, for instance, Sweden made sex education in schools compulsory in the 1950s. According to legislation, schools are supposed to promote the right to individual's choices when it comes to sexual life styles and it should also promote equal right of men and women and gender equality. In Sweden, most of the medical clinics supply teenagers with contraceptives and prescriptions for over 30 years now and female virginity has never been an issue as compared to most of the Western countries . These developments were however not unique to Sweden as they were not reforms but rather enactments of deep rooted cultural traits and therefore were accepted more easily and / or earlier than in other countries (Bo Lewin, 2008: 748-753).

The relative equality between the sexes which is found in Sweden as well as the positive attitude towards otherwise subjugated groups- such as adolescents and women, along with other genders and also having sexual experience is by no means has been evolved as a result of moral superiority that Sweden holds, but all have been evolved as a result of an almost equally shared poverty and extremely low population

density in which fecundity of women was seen more of a blessings and therefore women were seen as partners and companions rather than threats to their male counterparts. In the words of Bo Lewin,<sup>208</sup> “We are deviants-not the rest of the world. The world is not going to eventually catch up with us and be like us. We are not the norm...but this does not mean that lessons cannot be learned from our history.”He further writes that rationality, independence and equality are the trinity of Nordic culture, and sex is not free but is rationally controlled by instilling a sense of responsibility into the young, honouring-at least on an ideological level-equality and fostering an independent individual who sexually was more rational than emotionally expressive (Lewin, B. 2008).

#### ***4.3 Swedish Welfare State ideology:***

“No other country has so often served as a role model in international social policy comparisons as Sweden” (Jansson, 2001:159). The public welfare of Sweden since thirteen century had been largely expressed through poor relief and was drawn on medieval charitable ideals of the Catholic Church. There was constant tussle between State, Church and various Voluntary organisations in carrying out the poor relief and deciding over the deserving recipients of the welfare benefits. Although the Swedish society underwent major social change over the time with shifts in power structure, nonetheless, concern for the public welfare had been followed throughout. The foundations of the strong state and comprehensive welfare were gradually laid down during 1930s with the Social Democratic Party (SAP) coming to power retaining their hold in the government till 1970s. An extensive and modern welfare provisions in form of Universal flat rate pensions, child benefits and compulsory health care were enacted and well accepted by the Swedish political system (Bergmark, 2001: 378-379)

Because of its distinctive characteristics, Sweden was singled out from its European Counterparts as a welfare state with respect to balancing between socialism and capitalism: “In the mid-twentieth century Sweden was presented as an attempt to find a ‘middle way’ between capitalism and socialism” (Childs 1947),<sup>209</sup> gradually emerged as a "prototype of the institutional welfare model” (Mishra, 1981). The

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<sup>208</sup> Interview with Prof. Bo Lewin at Department of Sociology, Uppsala University, Sweden, 22 May 2014.

<sup>209</sup> Cited in Alcock, P., and Craig, G. (eds.). 2009: 130

contemporary literature on western welfare states also labeled Sweden as the most developed example of a universal welfare state (Flora, 1986; Esping-Andersen 1990, 1996).

By promoting a socially egalitarian<sup>210</sup> citizenship based on notions of solidarity and redistributive social justice, the Swedish social democratic welfare state has had a comparatively high degree of universalism regarding social benefits (Kautto *et al.* 2001 and SOU 2000: 83; Gunnarsson *et al.* 2004).<sup>211</sup>

‘The universalism in receiving social benefits such as the public child care, healthcare services and means-tested benefits like housing allowance, greatly impacted the lives of women. Gainful employment for both women and men was considered significant factor in achieving economic independence and in earning the right to social security. Therefore, the idea of ‘workfare’ marks the core element of employment policies of the Swedish welfare state model ensuring the egalitarian ideology of social citizenship. Unlike ‘bread-winner’ ideology, the notion of ‘workfare’ allowed men and women to have become self supporting individuals within the labour market, thus promoting the ideal of ‘dual-earner family ideology’. Since its genesis, Swedish welfare state created a conducive socio-political set up that enabled women to fulfill their responsibilities of care whilst pursuing their wish to be self supporting. This further facilitated strategies that help women to combine paid work with family life therefore motivating women to enter into labour market. Sweet therefore succeeded in active integration of women into the public sphere of social citizenship. Besides this, initiation of individual taxation together with various progressive social reforms like public child care and equal parental leave adored great value to Swedish welfare commitments. Moreover, democratic values that feature gender equality as essential element were ingrained into the minds of people through educational institutes thereby leading to bring changes in gendered stereotypes both within education itself, and in the pursuit of professional careers and possibilities within the job market’(Eva-Maria Svensson and Asa Gunnarsson, 2012: 2-3).

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<sup>210</sup> Sweden has largest number of female representatives in its Political set up (45% in National and 43% in local legislatures. See for more details at [http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly\\_exec\\_revie w/9314.pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_revie w/9314.pdf). Women are highly concentrated in the Swedish labour market (71.8%) and is the highest and above the average of EU-27 (58.6%). See for more details at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/epo\\_campaign/131006\\_country-profile\\_sweden.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/epo_campaign/131006_country-profile_sweden.pdf). Such a high representation both in decision making and labour market indicates for a highly egalitarian Swedish society.

<sup>211</sup> Cited in Svensson, E. M., & Gunnarsson, A. (2012).

#### *4.3.1 Gender equality regulation<sup>212</sup> in Swedish law*

Beside, welfare set up, extensive legal and constitutional provisions strongly reinforce Swedish gender equality policy. The regulations regarding gender equality have been largely influenced by different legal cultures and legislative powers. Some of these gender equality regulations are defined “within the framework of liberal state-oriented anti-discrimination legislation and others are rooted in the Swedish welfare state ideology and is aimed to change the structural patterns of sex and gender discrimination” (ibid.: 7). All the regulations stipulated in the Swedish law with respect to gender equality largely get influenced by formal equality principle. “This principle was codified in the constitution in 1976, together with the recognition of possible exceptions for specific rules aimed at improving equality (Svensson 2001).” Over time, additional regulations were also incorporated in order to ensure equality.

Most of these regulations regarding gender equality are framed in line with European Union anti-discrimination provisions and some other proactive measures. However, sometimes these regulations are used differently by Sweden and the EU: For instance, when it comes to “criminalising purchase of sex and the importance of shared parental leave (Gunnarsson and Svensson 2009: 64-69)<sup>213</sup>, Sweden sets out its own regulations. In some cases, Swedish regulations which are sought to be adjusted in the EU equality regulation do not meet its expectation. For instance, “the formal sex equality principle in the Swedish constitution has still not fully been adjusted to the equality regulation of the TEU” (SOU 2007: 67). Rather, substantive gender equality principle of the EU replaced this formal sex equality principle since 1990 and Sweden is compelled to follow the same. This led gender equality regulation in Sweden to act upon both formal (sex) neutrality and substantive (gender) equality principles.

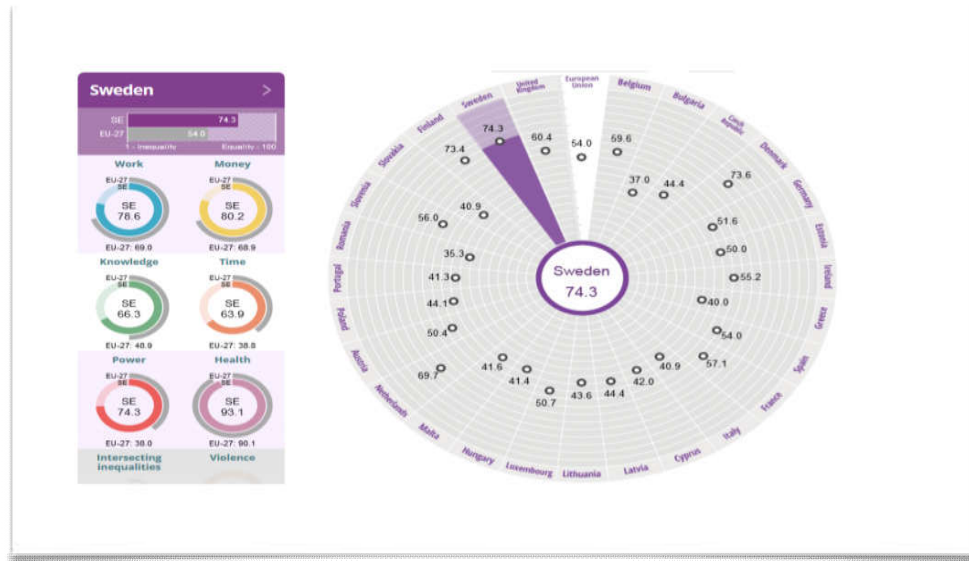
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<sup>212</sup> “The term ‘gender equality regulation’ covers sex neutrality, gender neutrality and sex or gender-sensitive regulation. Sex neutrality remains the main objective behind all gender equality regulation in Sweden, with anti-discrimination regulation being based very much on this view” (Svensson & Gunnarsson, A. 2012).

<sup>213</sup> Cited in Svensson & Gunnarsson, A. 2012: 8.



Figure: 4.1 The Gender Equality Index: Sweden



Source: <http://eige.europa.eu/content/gender-equality-index#/?country=SE> (Retrieved on Dec 31, 2014).

In other words, the Swedish welfare state model emphasised the principle of equality of outcome over equality of opportunity and education became essential element in achieving gender equality. In the Nordic welfare context, equality between men and women has, according to Pylkkänen, been understood as a redistribution issue, shifted from 1990’s towards a framework of increasing human rights and hence signifies an emphasis on recognition (Pylkkänen, 2007).

The progressive nature of Sweden with respect to promoting values of gender equality, social justice and other human rights issues can be explained with the help of ‘Cultural Map of the World’-a theoretical framework put forth by Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel. In this, they depicted how cultural values vary between societies and are proportionately linked with changing mindset. Their analysis has gained its validity from the World Values Survey<sup>214</sup> through which they created more precisely a scattered plot of cultural map of the world. This scattered plot charted closely related to cultural values which vary between societies in two central dimensions: “(i)

<sup>214</sup> World Values Survey (WVS), is the largest non-commercial, cross-national, time series investigation of human beliefs and values. It started in 1981 incorporating 400,000 respondents from 100 countries. It represents various survey results conducted from 1995 to 1999, 2000 to 2004, and 2005 to 2009. For details please see <http://www.businessinsider.com/inglehart-welzel-culture-map-2014-7?IR=T>.

the traditional<sup>215</sup> versus secular-rational values<sup>216</sup> on the vertical y-axis and (ii) survival<sup>217</sup> versus self-expression values<sup>218</sup> on the horizontal x-axis.”<sup>219</sup> Various countries across the world are put together on this double axis of values. The more any society move upward on this map, it indicates a transformation from traditional values to the secular-rational ones and with the moving towards the right indicates transformation from survival values towards self-expression values. For Inglehart and Welzel, “these two dimensions explain more than 70% of the cross national variance in a factor analysis of ten indicators and each of these dimensions is strongly correlated with scores of other important orientations.”<sup>220</sup> They emphasised on the fact that such transformation of societies depends not only on the inherent socio-economic factors rather religious, cultural and historical elements of that country or society also contribute to a large extent in mapping its position.

According to the cultural map, religion is predominantly strong in those societies who are more proximate to the traditional/secular-rational axis. This implies a strong emphasis on family values, defence of authority, rejection of abortion, divorce, euthanasia and suicide and even seems to predict a very nationalistic outlook on life. However, countries who are more proximate to the ‘secular-rational’ side of this axis, the attitude becomes more secular and thus it places less preference on religion and traditional authority and are more in line with accepting abortion and divorce.

The second major dimension of cross-cultural variation is related with the transition from industrial society to post industrial societies leading to polarisation between survival and self-expression values. It represented a shift from societies dominated by

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<sup>215</sup> Traditional values emphasise the importance of religion, parent-child ties, deference to authority, absolute standards and traditional family values. People who embrace these values reject the idea of divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide. Societies that embrace these values have high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook. See Inglehart, Ronald. and Chris Welzel. 2011

<sup>216</sup> “Secular-rational values have the opposite preferences to the traditional values. Societies that embrace these values place less emphasis on religion, traditional family values and authority. Divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide are seen as relatively acceptable”. For details please see Supra note 215.

<sup>217</sup> Survival values place emphasis on economic and physical security. They are linked with a relatively ethnocentric outlook and low levels of trust and tolerance.

<sup>218</sup> “Self-expression values give high priority to subjective well-being, self-expression and quality of life. Some values are more common in societies that embrace these values, include environmental protection, growing tolerance of foreigners, gays and lesbians and gender equality, rising demands for participation in decision-making in economic and political life, interpersonal trust and political moderation. The shift from survival to self-expression represents a transition from industrial society to post-industrial society, as well as embracing democratic values”. For details Supra note 215.

<sup>219</sup> Supra note 215.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

the struggle for survival to one where survival is given and the priority of ‘struggle’ is shifted from an immensely growth oriented economy and physical security towards an increasing emphasis on the subjective well-being, quality of life and self expression.<sup>221</sup> Inglehart and Baker (2000) opined that almost all the industrial societies have shifted from a traditional set up towards a more secular-rational value oriented system. However, unlike post industrialisation, modernisation is one phenomenon in which, when a society has completed industrialisation and starts moving towards modernity, it transforms itself into a knowledge society and move from survival values towards increasing self-expression values with new values and objectives.

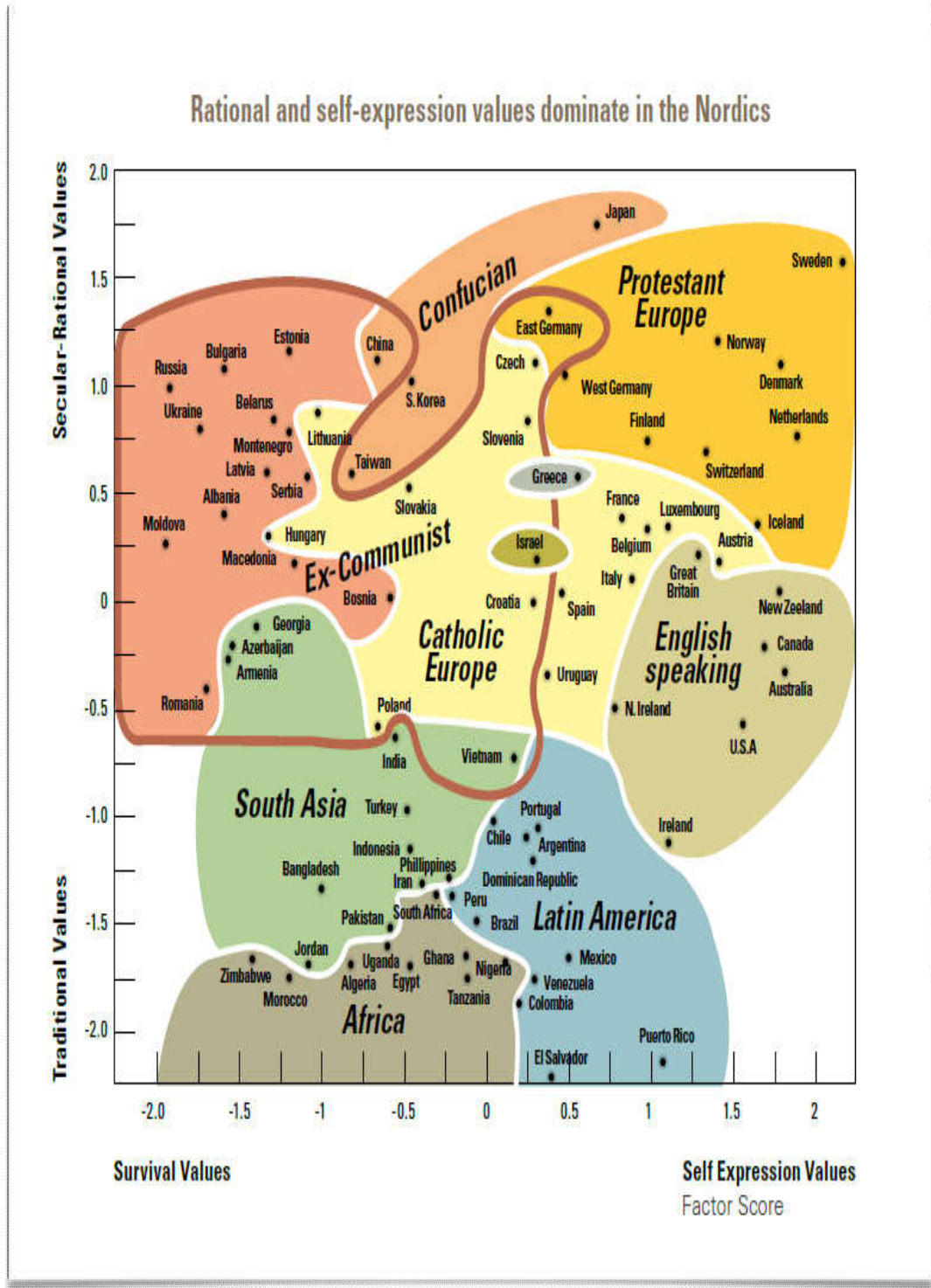
In the context of Sweden, the chart shows a higher degree of alignment towards secular-rational and self-expression values. The chart also shows that Sweden, Japan and Czech Republic are the most secular-rational countries of the world and Sweden along with its Nordic neighbours held top positions with respect to self-expression values. This may be because of a solid historical anchoring of these societies in the traditions of liberal enlightenment. The presence of such values which provide a strong image of Sweden can be considered to be rooted in its own socio-historical and cultural set up. Following the analysis of the authors, while Sweden makes a transit from being industrialised to a post-industrial knowledge society<sup>222</sup>, it seeks to give more priorities to developing the well being of its citizen and their freedom of choices, values for human rights and social justice - all of which are indicator of better the human development set up. This is perhaps the reason why it shows a diagonal shift in the direction from lower left corner (poor) to upper-right corner(rich), indicating movement in both dimensions(see figure below).

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

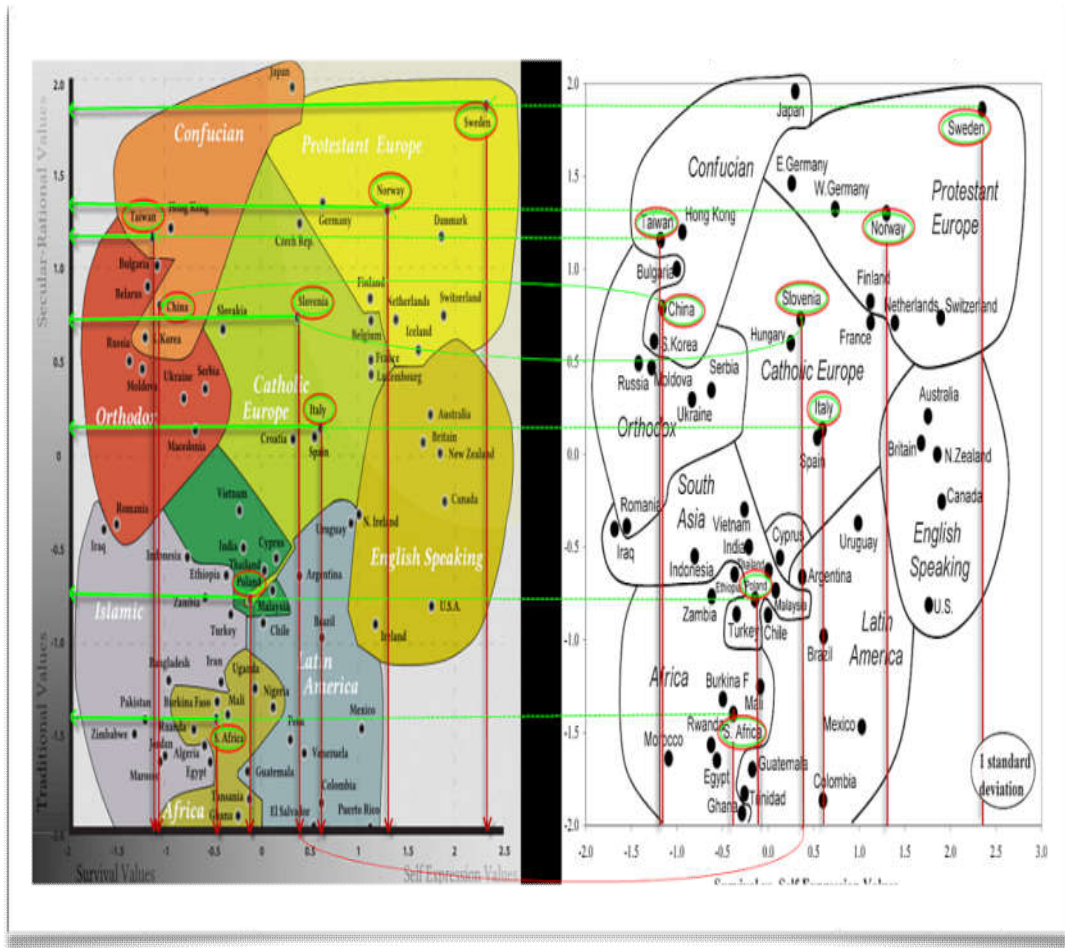
<sup>222</sup> One of the most significant characteristics of post materialist knowledge based societies is its democratic set up which underlies a normative concept that emphasises free choice, autonomy, and emancipation. These values sought to give weightage to individual liberty over collective discipline, human diversity over group conformity and civic autonomy over state authority. For details please see Inglehart, Ronald. and Christian Welzel, (2000) .

Figure: 4.2 World Value Survey 2014



Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Inglehart\\_Values\\_Map2.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Inglehart_Values_Map2.svg)

Figure 4.3: Elaboration on the World Cultural Map



Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Inglehart\\_Values\\_Map2.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Inglehart_Values_Map2.svg)

An effective democracy reflects deep rooted commitments for all these values. In Sweden, there is an existence of effective democracy which is reflected through various secular-rational and self expression values. With respect to gender equality, not only women tend to set free their traditional role limitations, but the issue of empowering women and gender equality is valued to a large extent by Sweden. Unlike other European societies, women in Sweden seem to live with greater equality and freedom with respect to choosing education, careers, and other issues related to their life. “Sweden exemplifies a society where women experience the highest level of parliamentary representation of any nation in the world, along with gender parity in

secondary schooling and paid employment and extensive parental rights and childcare facilities”(Ronald Inglehart and Pipa Norris 2003).

A specific concept, ‘jämställdhet’,<sup>223</sup> was introduced in politics with an objective to identify the existing gender inequality and act accordingly. Olof Palme (Prime Minister and Chair of Social Democratic Party) launched this concept in two famous speeches at the National party conventions during the fall of 1972, and jämställdhet subsequently became institutionalised as an official area of governmental policy. Thus women's right for equal opportunities became an integral part of the Swedish welfare objectives (Eva-Maria Svensson and Asa Gunnarsson, 2012: 4).

The rationality in religious values contributed to a great extent in laying down the effective democracy and also strengthening its value for self expression. Cochrane *et al* (2000) puts up that the inherent liberal values of:

“Sweden’s cultural and socio-economic history lies particularly in its liberal Protestantism and the absence of a conservative Catholic tradition...” The lack of Catholicism’s traditional, restrictive and highly moralistic influence may have allowed for “...the development for Sweden’s pioneering, interventionist and liberal social policies....” (p. 213)

The overall results on the chart indicate strong presence of egalitarian values in Finland, Sweden, West Germany, Canada, and Norway in contrast to countries like Nigeria, Morocco, Egypt, Bangladesh, and Jordan that lack in this. And for Inglehart and Welzel, egalitarian values are directly proportionate to the actual conditions of women's and men's lives. They concluded that cultural change is largely instigated by modernisation leading to attitudinal shifts taken from traditional to gender-equal values, and subsequently impacting wider gender-equality processes Sweden initiates this change.

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<sup>223</sup> “Jämställdhet is translated as either sex or gender equality, but has different connotations depending on context. It embraces the specific equality between men and women. By situating men and women as equals, jämställdhet managed to ‘iron out’ the dimension of power in gender relations within the official, social democratic political agenda”(For details please see Eva-Maria Svensson and Gunnarsson, 2012: 2-3).

#### 4.5 Relevance of Swedish Model for the EU

“Sweden has solved the population and family problems of modern societies. The depopulation that threatens the entire developed and industrial world, Sweden has been able to counter it by an aggressive, feminist-inspired reconstruction of the family and by single-minded pursuit of gender equality in all aspects of social, cultural and economic life.”<sup>224</sup>

This passage brings forth the significance of Swedish gender equality policy and its inherent visions that makes it considerate to be emulated or to be transferred across Europe. For Jean-Claude Chesnois: “In Sweden...empowerment of women rises against a very low birth rate,” (1996). J.M.Hoem (1990) also links Sweden’s success to a “softening” of “the effects of women’s labour market participation in their life sufficiently to reduce the inherent role conflict (relative to motherhood to a manageable level.”

Based on Sweden’s remarkable progress on gender equality over the decades, some sociologists and thinkers hold that the experience of Sweden should be exported across Europe. One of the most significant claims to consider Sweden as a unique model for Europe is possibly driven by the existing demographic deficit/crisis that European Union has been facing throughout. The existing demographic crisis along with low fertility rate across; the increasing divorce rate; increasing rate of single parent as well as new demand for inclusive development and growth make it all essential for the EU to look for solutions. For example,

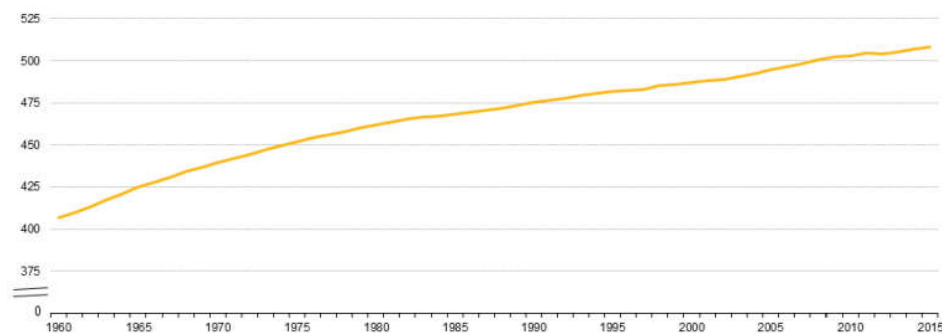
“in the year 2000, the whole of Europe (from Iceland to European Russia) recorded a Total Fertility Rate of only 1.37, roughly meaning that the average European woman will bear 1.37 children during her lifetime, only 65 percent of the level needed to replace a generation. In that same year, 2000, 17 European nations already recorded an absolute decline in numbers, with deaths outnumbering births [...] some regions of Spain (such as Catalonia and the Basque country), of Italy (including Rome, Venicia, and Tuscany), and of Germany (such as Saxony) have had total fertility rates well below 1.0. In Northern Europe, marriage became increasingly rare, replaced by cohabitation; in Southern Europe, young adults increasingly avoid both marriage and cohabitation, refusing to form childbearing unions of any sort. This is the essence of joint European family and population crisis of the twenty-first century.”<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> See The Failure of European Family Policy, 2009 (URL:<http://canadianvalues.ca/ICV/?p=2629>).

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

At present, most women in the EU are career oriented and do not want to have babies or give up their careers for their children: “the EU has the world's best educated housewives. With ever more elderly men and women, the Union's population risks turning into Jurassic Park unless more children are born. Access to childcare is crucial if more people are to be able to combine their family and professional lives.”<sup>226</sup> The existing reality that haunts the EU today is that the EU not only needs to push more women into the labour market but also to maintain its commitment for higher GDP. However, maintaining both seems to be a pressing challenge for the EU. “Currently, an average of just six out of ten women in the EU is in gainful employment, dropping as low as four out of ten in certain countries. Men earn almost 20 percent more than women, and four times more women than men work part time. Women in the EU also earn less than men, meaning that women's economic freedom is more limited.”<sup>227</sup> The following figures show a demographic deficit rate as well as low fertility rate respectively at the European level. As Figure 22 shows, the current demographic situation in the EU-28 is characterised by continuing population growth. However, the rate of population growth has slowed gradually in recent decades: for example, during the period 1994–2014, the EU-28’s population increased, on average, by about 1.3 million persons per year compared with an annual average of around 3.3 million persons per year in the 1960s.<sup>228</sup> Figure 4.4 Population of the EU-28, 1950-2015



(\*) Excluding French overseas departments up to and including 1997. Breaks in series: 2001 and 2010–12, 2014 and 2015.  
Source: Eurostat (online data code: dem\_gind)

Source: Euro stat (Online data code\_gind)

<sup>226</sup> Available at <http://www.thelocal.se/20100225/25216>

<sup>227</sup> See for more details <http://www.thelocal.se/20100225/25216>

<sup>228</sup> See for more details at [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Population,\\_EU-28,\\_1960\\_2015\\_\(1\)\\_\(at\\_1\\_January,\\_million\\_persons\)\\_YB15\\_II.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Population,_EU-28,_1960_2015_(1)_(at_1_January,_million_persons)_YB15_II.png)



Figure : 4.5 Total fertility rate in Europe, 1960–2014 (live births per woman)

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2012	2013	2014
EU-28 (*)						1.62	1.58	1.54	1.58
Belgium (*)	2.54	2.25	1.68	1.62	1.67	1.86	1.79	1.75	1.74
Bulgaria	2.31	2.17	2.05	1.82	1.28	1.57	1.50	1.48	1.53
Czech Republic	2.09	1.92	2.08	1.90	1.15	1.51	1.45	1.46	1.53
Denmark	2.57	1.95	1.55	1.67	1.77	1.87	1.73	1.67	1.69
Germany (*)					1.38	1.39	1.38	1.39	1.47
Estonia	1.98	2.17	2.02	2.05	1.36	1.72	1.56	1.52	1.54
Ireland	3.78	3.85	3.21	2.11	1.89	2.05	2.01	1.96	1.94
Greece	2.23	2.40	2.23	1.39	1.25	1.48	1.34	1.29	1.30
Spain			2.20	1.36	1.23	1.37	1.32	1.27	1.32
France (*)					1.89	2.03	2.01	1.99	2.01
Croatia						1.55	1.51	1.46	1.46
Italy	2.37	2.38	1.64	1.33	1.26	1.46	1.43	1.39	1.37
Cyprus				2.41	1.64	1.44	1.39	1.30	1.31
Latvia					1.25	1.36	1.44	1.52	1.65
Lithuania		2.40	1.99	2.03	1.39	1.50	1.60	1.59	1.63
Luxembourg (*)	2.29	1.97	1.50	1.60	1.76	1.63	1.57	1.55	1.50
Hungary (*)	2.02	1.98	1.91	1.87	1.32	1.25	1.34	1.35	1.44
Malta			1.99	2.04	1.70	1.36	1.43	1.38	1.42
Netherlands	3.12	2.57	1.60	1.52	1.72	1.79	1.72	1.68	1.71
Austria	2.69	2.29	1.65	1.46	1.36	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.47
Poland (*)				2.06	1.37	1.41	1.33	1.29	1.32
Portugal	3.16	3.01	2.25	1.56	1.55	1.39	1.28	1.21	1.23
Romania			2.43	1.83	1.31	1.59	1.52	1.41	1.52
Slovenia				1.46	1.26	1.57	1.58	1.55	1.58
Slovakia	3.04	2.41	2.32	2.09	1.30	1.43	1.34	1.34	1.37
Finland	2.72	1.83	1.63	1.78	1.73	1.87	1.80	1.75	1.71
Sweden		1.92	1.68	2.13	1.54	1.98	1.91	1.89	1.88
United Kingdom			1.90	1.83	1.64	1.92	1.92	1.83	1.81
Iceland		2.81	2.48	2.30	2.08	2.20	2.04	1.93	1.93
Liechtenstein					1.57	1.40	1.51	1.45	1.59
Norway		2.50	1.72	1.93	1.85	1.95	1.85	1.78	1.75
Switzerland (*)	2.44	2.10	1.55	1.58	1.50	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.54
Montenegro						1.70	1.72	1.73	1.75
FYR of Macedonia					1.88	1.56	1.51	1.49	1.52
Albania									1.78
Serbia (*)					1.48	1.40	1.45	1.43	1.46
Turkey						2.04	2.09	2.08	2.17

(\*) 2012 and 2014: break in series.

(\*) 2012: break in series.

(\*) 2014: break in series.

(\*) 2000: break in series.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo\_frate)

Source: Euro stat

Figure 4.5 represents the fertility rate in EU-28 which is found to be lower than replacement rate (2.1 live birth per woman in developed countries) of 1.58 in 2014 which indicates that EU is approaching towards 'lowest low fertility' of 1.3 live births per woman<sup>229</sup>.

Sweden can therefore be an emerging rescue model for the pan Europe, with claims of providing unique solution to Europe's imminent problems. In the research report titled "Gender Equality-A key to our Future?" Lena Sommestad (2001) spelled out indispensable nature of Swedish family policy in the making of future Europe. She said that Sweden's gender equality policies built a strong tradition of pronatalist and supportive social policies that are relevant to a Europe faced with declining birth rates and ageing populations<sup>230</sup>.

Sommestad's main points of affirmation were based on Europe's existential reality like challenges of declining fertility, declining population rate, tumbling marriage rates, and risking out-of-wedlock' births and she posed two reasons behind this: (i) female emancipation and (ii) a crisis of the traditional European male breadwinner family. She expressed that nations like Germany, Italy, and Spain, that have tried to protect or endorse the traditional male breadwinner model (in which women's traditional roles are given utmost priority) have failed to perceive the consequences of such restricted view towards gender role relations and have paid the price with extremely low fertility. Sweden however, recognises women's full emancipation and considers gender equality as the key to a sustainable future. She further said that "population ageing, problematic as it is, may prove to be window of opportunity for radical gender equality reform." She claims: "that birth rates are particularly low in countries that support traditional patterns of marriage and breadwinning...since the early 1980's, high birth rates in the industrialised world have tended to go hand in hand with a high level of female labour force participation...women's access to the labour market appears to be prerequisite for a higher birth rate." She also adds that "countries that do not stigmatise non-marital cohabitation or extra-marital births have a better chance of maintaining higher fertility levels. The Swedish model shows that to raise the birth rate men must also take on "a greater responsibility" for child care. For all the imminent crisis that Europe is facing in the 21st century she argues that

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<sup>229</sup> For more details see [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Fertility\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Fertility_statistics).

<sup>230</sup> Available at <http://womensnews.org/2014/04/sweden-pushed-gender-equality-boost-birth-rates/>

European countries should eliminate the full time mother and homemaker, crush the family wage, abolish the home as an economic institution, welcome out-of wedlock births and cohabitation, push all women -especially actual or potential mothers into the labour force, enforce strict gender equality in all areas of life, re-engineer men into child care-givers and embrace state child allowance, parental leave and public day-care programmes. The result will be more babies. (Sommestad : 2-3). In the early 1990s, Bernhardt (1991) and Pinelli (1995) also consider Swedish experience as a positive example for other countries in Europe to follow and rationalises the possibility of encouraging fertility increase by following Sweden.

The importance of institutional changes that facilitate women to combine the production and reproduction has even been stressed by Euro stat which through its various population projections, has made future fertility levels in the EU countries depend on the possible implementation of such policies (Gunnar Andersson and Scott, 2007: 3)

Sweden is often considered as a point of reference for most of European demographers which usually stems from two reasons: “First, Sweden leads in the development of significant aspects of family-demographic behaviour, and second, it possesses some of the best demographic data in the world” (ibid: 2). It continuously interests the demographers for its innovations in policy development particularly Swedish family policy<sup>231</sup> which not only received acknowledgement because of its dual objective of strengthening women’s labour market participation and promoting gender equality. The policies were directed more towards individuals and not families per se and thus reflecting a radical model of not complying with usual family norms and all.

A wider understanding of imminent crisis in Europe particularly the crude birth rates and various other indicators pertaining to European countries may be a grounding reason to look at Swedish experience. Persistent focus on gender equality in public as well as in private life seems to offer a better strategy for policy makers in creating an environment where childbearing is not seen by women as a step towards reduced personal freedom (ibid.: 12).

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<sup>231</sup> Parental-leave and public child care are key elements of Swedish family policy.

As growing inequality is one of EU's posing challenges, Sweden can be a pioneer in minimising that challenge in Europe. In its official statement of policy towards the European Union, the Swedish government expressed its goal: "we want to see a Union that is open, effective and gender equal." Various political statements in Swedish government reflect a feminist agenda which is Sweden's primary objective within the EU. One such statement reads: "Sweden has a particular responsibility for increasing the pace of gender equality efforts in Europe. Decisions have already been taken to the effect that an equal opportunity perspective shall permeate all aspects of the EU's employment strategy. Gender equality aspects should be integrated into all areas of policy. Modern family policies that promote the supply of labour regarding both women and men and which enable family life to be combined with a professional life, are needed in order to meet the demographic challenges Europe faces." The official documents pouring out of the European Commission also reflect even greater attention to gender equality and harmonisation of European family policy around the Swedish model, stressing "an individualisation of rights" and a "new gender balance in working life" involving basic "changes in family structure."

Sweden as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter has reached relatively high status in the development and gender Indices, with respect to its highly appreciated citizen related social-policy benefits and rights, values for human rights and gender equality etc. However, there are still apprehensions as to what extent aspiration for a Swedish model is applicable in all situations in all the European countries. There are apprehensions as it be a mistake to follow this popular role model without considering the variability seen in different societies: "Some skepticism about such 'Swedocentrism' (Shalev, 1983) - a tendency to use Sweden without reflection as a role model for other countries-is therefore in order". The following segment further explores possibilities and challenges in such adaptation to Sweden's gender equality model.

#### **4.6 Can Swedish Model be emulated at the European Level? : The possibilities and Challenges**

After delineating various features and characteristics of Swedish gender equality policy framework, this segment of the chapter seeks to address the most vital question for the research which is: what ways, varied discourses of gender equality across member states, are being influenced through the Normative discourse of the European Union?; what are the possibilities and challenges to adopt a uniform EU gender policy? and also to what extent Swedish model can be emulated?

While the European Union, has emerged as a Normative actor in the international domain whose standards, norms and ideas are sought to be transferred (Europeanised) across its member states and beyond, the questions that strike our mind is what are the ways and means through which the EU does its Europeanisation of its normative ideas and what are the affirmation and resistance it faces when dealing with its normative provisions for the member states.

To this end, what has been most useful point of reference is the correlation between discourse analysis and the concept of New Institutionalism. In this direction this chapter sought to study whether the prevalent EU gender discourse that validates for an economic opportunity between men and women as means for achieving gender equality in the labour market at the EU level, can be replaced by a new discourse of mainstreaming gender equality propounded by Sweden in which not only economic independence is ensured but also a substantial transformation in the gender role relations within family is sought to be delivered.

The concept of 'discourse analysis' can be used for analysing this. The concept 'discourse' has received meanings in both Habermasian and Foucaultian sense. In its former sense, it is defined as *ideas and communicative action* and acquires a causal role in relation to institutions, however, in a Foucaultian way; it is defined in terms of *knowledge and power*. "They maintain a critical distance from the notion of '*discursive institutionalism*' because of its tendency to fix institutions as something given, which is an antithesis to Foucaultian ways of understanding institutions as fluid and in constant need of reproduction" (Bacchi and Rönnblom 2014: 171). In the first

chapter (Introduction) it was argued that formulation and implication of policy depends on how any ‘problem area’ is defined in the institutional policy discourse. And therefore, in order to study Europeanisation of a Swedish model, what could be useful is to first see how the concept of gender equality has been defined through or taken up different meanings at the EU level or how such definition is being accepted by the EU member countries.

The concept of New Institutionalism<sup>232</sup> helps in understanding various ways and means through which the EU channelises its gender policy network and what are the Various EU mechanisms are at play while transporting values and objectives of the EU across its member states. There are three different Europeanisation mechanisms through which values and objectives are being transported: (i) new institutional models altering the domestic rules of the game; (ii) changing domestic opportunity structures by altering the distribution of power and resources between domestic actors through different funding and capacity building schemes; and (iii) changing the beliefs of domestic actors (Knill and Lehmkuhl1999: 2-3).

The concept of New Institutionalism significantly provide a setting ground for analysing EU’s influence on gender equality model at the national level. Essentially there are three segments within New Institutionalism namely, “Historical Institutionalism, Rational Choice Institutionalism and Sociological Institutionalism” (Hall & Taylor 1996: 5). The Historical Institutionalism deals with the aspect of Institutions and its various processing techniques. According to Historical Institutions, Institutions are “legacy of historical process” (Thelen 1999: 382) and “Institutions can adopt various forms, even legal texts, as those have a manifested ongoing influence” (Peters 2005: 71). European Court of Justice, as an institutional actor, plays a major role in influencing Gender Equality at the EU level. Various legal texts and ruling of the ECJ has a great relevance for the European Commission and European Parliament as it not only makes its directives followed but also in defining gender equality.

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<sup>232</sup> New Institutionalism requires to analyse the institutions. Institutional actors involve in the process of governance becoming the focus here. At the EU level, multiple actors are at play for the governance such as the European Commission, the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice with their distinct responsibilities that in turn influence the process of decision making at the EU level.

#### ***4.6.1 Framework of Interests:***

According to Rational Choice Institutionalism, Institutions are driven by self Interests: “They behave entirely instrumentally so as to maximise the attainment of these preferences, and do so in a highly strategic manner that presumes extensive calculation” (Hall & Taylor 1996: 10). In case of its member states, the EU substantially influence and controls the domestic set up based on its own interests. The EU provides certain incentive benefits to the member states that are preceded with certain predetermined conditionality considered as accession criteria to become part of the EU. This Positive Conditionality is therefore required to be adopted by the potential member states during the EU accession process.<sup>233</sup>. This Positive Conditionality<sup>234</sup> represents an ‘Interests-based tools’ of the EU. Semsit defines EU conditionality<sup>235</sup> as a “‘rationalist bargaining model’ where the benefits exceed the cost of domestic adoption” (Semsit 2009: 29).

#### ***4.6.2 Framework of Ideas or Europeanisation<sup>236</sup>:***

The Sociological Institutionalism emphasises on the relevance of values and ideas within institutions. It focuses on how institutions take different forms and interact with its members. For Hall and Taylor, institutions provide “frames of meaning guiding human action” (Hall & Taylor 1996: 14). Framework of ideas can be understood with respect to how European integration takes place through the adoption process of “new rules, procedures and practices” (Dirzu 2011: 53). In this context, while the ECJ draws more on legislative procedures to be followed by the member states through its citizens, the European Commission acts more through implementation of treaty provisions and decisions. Thus EU possesses hard as well as

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<sup>233</sup> See for details at

<http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=2275512&fileId=2275514>

<sup>234</sup> Positive conditionality implies a set of mutual arrangements between the member states and the European Union, which provides financial support in terms of accomplishing certain policy actions by the member states. Among various tools of compliance, it is considered the most effective one. While negative conditionality implies that if any objectives and values of the EU is not fulfilled, it can cause punishment or sanctions, positive conditionality is based on the belief of supporting the member states which will lead economic growth and progress.

<sup>235</sup> There are different types of EU conditionality: Ex-post conditionality makes it conditional for member states to ratify law or other decisions when a treaty is ratified, while ex-ante conditionality requires prior approval. Further, there is Negative Conditionality that imposes threat to an existing situation if promises are not fulfilled. Positive conditionality is however used to support the member states which will lead economic growth and progress.

<sup>236</sup> Europeanisation accounts for overspreading implementation of the EU’s institutional norms and values across its member states.

soft mechanisms ranging from the EU legislation and the work of the ECJ to soft monitoring and best practice sharing<sup>237</sup> and through these mechanisms the EU propagates its ideas and values.

#### ***4.6.3 Europeanisation through ‘Hard-Law’:***

Europeanisation that takes place through hard law is associated with the supremacy of EU law that directly or indirectly influences its member states. The backbone of these ‘legal compliance mechanism’ is article 226 ECT which grants Commission the right to monitor member state compliance and sanction noncompliance through European Court of Justice (ECJ):

“The Commission relies heavily on monitoring by external factors including citizens, firms and public interest groups and European parliament (Borzel 2006: 133). The direct involvement of the EU law provides the citizens and groups with the opportunity to “litigate to get their EU rights enforced against the resistance of their governments” (Ibid: 147).<sup>238</sup>”

In gender studies, a frequently cited example of an effective litigation strategy is the British women’s movement and groups that have effectively used this strategy against their recalcitrant government (Alter and Vargas 2000). This led to negotiate in women’s labour market and care leave arrangements resulting into initiating maternity leave and pay.

However, most of the member states are inconsistent with these mechanisms: “non-compliance is the highest in member states where social actors are the weakest and vice-versa; a process that Tanja Borzel calls the “empowerment of the already powerful” (Borzel 2006: 130).”<sup>239</sup> The problem of non compliance is also related to the prescribed reforms in the accession process that are usually set forth in a technocratic manner without really having a substantive understanding of inherent gender inequality problems in the country. For an instance, in Hungary, gender equality was treated with a high level of generality, omitting detailed policies or specific tools for implementing policy objectives, which was a symptom of the lack of political will and commitment to the issue. Such an approach did little to address the needs and concerns of Hungarian women (Kakucs and Peto 2008: 179).

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<sup>237</sup> Supra.209

<sup>238</sup> Cited in Kantola, 2010: 192.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.



Some of the bottlenecks in this approach is that sometimes these hard laws are not effective in big member countries such as France, where collective actions are not so influential political tool in the struggle for women's rights. The domestic institutional structures most of the time create hurdle in using this strategy. Hence, although the court activity and litigation strategy are important elements for Europeanisation of hard law, they become ineffective most of the time and the link between court activity and advancing Europeanisation in relation to hard law in member states is not straightforward (Leibert 2003b: 264).<sup>240</sup> Therefore, effects of national political actions are very often considered more effective than litigation strategies.

As a matter of fact, in the process of Europeanisation through hard law the issue of 'compliance' acquires different meanings for different member states. Implementation of the anti-discrimination directives was one of the fields in which Commission insisted strongly on compliance before candidate states were held to have satisfied for the accession to the EU. Accordingly, the Commission has framed its accession rules strictly with the new member states. However, the strictness was not shown in case of old members (Guiraudon (2008: 304).

#### ***4.6.4 Europeanisation through soft law:***

Besides transferring its objectives, ideas and norms through rational based factors that is through hard law' approach, there is another way to transfer ideas and that is through the EU soft law/approach. While the implementation of EU hard law can be associated with Rational Choice institutionalism, out spreading the EU soft law through ideas and values is associated with Sociological Institutionalism. While rules and regulations reflected through hard law remain the strength of the EU integration, there is increasing interest towards indirect means and mechanisms like action plans, various recommendation, policy documents which are reflected through soft law, seem to have wider impact on member states. Unlike its 'Hard Law', EU's 'Soft Law' is unbinding, yet has significant impact on member states. Virginie Guiraudon suggests "that in case of anti-discrimination, the EU soft norms or instruments such as monitoring and benchmarking have had more impact in certain countries than the required transposition of directives" (2008: 305). The European Employment Strategy (EES) is another element of soft law. Despite its relative failure in implementing

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<sup>240</sup> Cited in in Kantola, 2010,

gender equality measures, it has a great impact in creating pressure for structural transformation and changes in the member states with conservative ideology and traditions based on strong male breadwinner/female carer model (Aybars 2008: 63). As such the EES perform better in some member states than the others and have been proved to be more effective than hard gender equality law.

Another critique against the soft law is that, “it enables the process of ‘window dressing’-varying interpretations of what counts as implementation of gender mainstreaming”(Verloo and Van der Vleuten 2009). Many scholars expressed that, the meaning of gender-mainstreaming at the EU level is shifted or co-opted with other priority areas and acquires different meanings according to situations. In talking about its ‘twisted usage’, some scholars suggested that gender mainstreaming has been Europeanised not as a tool to reduce gender inequalities but as a means to promote more labour force participation and labor market flexibility (Bruno *et.al.* 2006: 531). Therefore, because of its flexible nature, the EU soft law leaves room for multiple interpretations, resulting into deviating from transferring the original goal of gender equality.

The challenges to implement the EU norms through the soft approach are mostly visible in case of Central and East European Countries (CEEC) accession to the EU. Although the Amsterdam Treaty of the EU reflects a strong commitment for gender mainstreaming in case CEEC, the provisions for gender equality have been restricted in the narrow domain of equal opportunities directives in the accession process, which in turn has sidelined the potential role of gender mainstreaming, which it could have played if properly defined. Gender equality is therefore perceived as a specific policy area rather than understanding its core principles implicated by gender mainstreaming. For example, Hungary did not show formal adoption of any strategic policy document that promotes gender mainstreaming, instead there were “only erratic signs showing gender mainstreaming awareness of the policymakers” (Kriszan and Zentai 2006: 138)<sup>241</sup>.

Hence, it can be said that, Europeanisation through soft law works through a different logic to Europeanisation than through hard law. Nevertheless, according to some interpretations:

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<sup>241</sup> Mentioned in Kantola 2010: 206.

“there is a positive and long term impact of soft law in achieving far reaching changes in member states than Europeanisation through hard law. Others draw attention to the ways in which soft law governance as evidenced in the Open Method Coordination (OMC), the European Employment Strategy (EES) and Gender mainstreaming are underpinned by norms of competition and managerial values resulting policy problems being reduced to sheer numbers, indicators and figures. In addition, soft law measures are often poorly implemented in both member states and the EU institutions as shown by gender mainstreaming. This poor implementation gives rise to questions as about the effectiveness of soft law in achieving desired change”(Kantola, 2010).

In case of Swedish model of gender equality, there are critiques who hold that the EU soft approach makes it evident how implementing one single model for all the member states is so difficult:

“This approach to Europeanisation also highlights that convergence in national policies is ‘neither theoretically predicted nor empirically likely’ and rather there is a ‘continual arbitrage’ between national differences, different adaptation pressures, different mediating institutions and outcomes” (Caporaso 2008: 31). In most the case, the Individual member countries have their own criteria and factors which always come in way while adapting one unique model and most of the time, the member states seem to resist, or modify which leads to having a differentiated outcome of one policy area. According to bottom up approach<sup>242</sup> to Europeanisation, “nearly every domestic structural condition that affects the impact of European integration’ shapes the outcomes” (Caporaso 2008: 30).

These mediating factors can range from cultural, institutional, discursive, formal and informal institutions, to norms, state and civil society structures, and traditions of litigation” (Liebert 2003). All these domestic factors therefore impact to a large extent in the implementation process of European policy.

In the following section, the chapter explores some of the key factors that hinder in the process of Europeanisation:

#### ***4.7 Existing barriers to Europeanisation:***

Many researchers hold that gender regime pose a powerful constraint in the process of Europeanization of a uniform gender equality model. This is because of the variations in gender equality policies across nations that largely influenced by the existing

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<sup>242</sup> The bottom up approaches to Europeanisation take the domestic level as their starting point and argue that EU policies are neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for Europeanisation. such possibility of bottom up approach might get jeopardised because of contemporary changes in the European policy, and for its growing powers and impact on the member states.

gender regime of the state and in turn makes it difficult to form consensus over a uniform policy. In addition to this, Stone Sweet and Brunel (1998) have spelled out strongly for legal enforcement mechanism being another influencing factor that affects the process of Europeanization. For them, court directives largely impact political decisions. For domestic compliance, national courts very often arrest the attention of executives and legislatures for conforming to ECJ's decisions. However, some other thinkers hold that, the directions of domestic courts do not necessarily result into compliance or non compliance of the EU norms.<sup>243</sup> Public attitude towards egalitarian values also have a lot to bring effect in the politics of Europeanisation by their governments. Lampinen and Uusikylä claim that national governments may receive set backs from general public while implementing any EU policy. They suggest: (1) “that the lower the overall mass support for the country’s membership in the EU, the higher the probability that a member state will face difficulties in implementing European policies (Lampinen & Uusikylä 1988: 239). As such variety of actors like individual politicians and representatives from parties and interest groups, civil society etc.-all create public pressure for/or against Europeanisation of the EU norms pertaining to gender equality policy. These actors and stakeholders of the respective member countries help in shaping policy debates and discussion which in turn results into making of “policy frames” in which new gender based definitions, norms or ideas that were possibly diffused by the EU may or may not be incorporated. Besides, presence of political elites and policy framing significantly influence the implementation of the EU gender equality directives in member states. Policy “framing” plays a central role in any single Europeanisation story. Sometimes, persistence of traditional norms as well as lack of policy framing hinder in the process of policy change. In case of Sweden, it experienced a mixed of responses from its elite groups on Europeanisation of gender equality discourse. Since its accession to the EU, a number of policy debates regarding gender equality were raised around issues of there have been a number of intense gender equality policy debates, pertaining to the EU, developed around issues of compulsory maternity leave, the ECJ’s rejection of the Swedish practice of gender quotas at universities, and the ECJ’s preliminary ruling on a Swedish Equal Pay case. “These issues were particularly

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<sup>243</sup> “Germany is a telling counter case with a strong record of 33 preliminary rulings standing in contrast with a relatively low performance of German legislators in implementing EC gender equality directives[...]Germany shows that that national court engagement in requesting ECJ decisions is not sufficient to prompt legislators to conform to EC norms in the area of equal treatment..”(Liebert, 2003).

sensitive because the EU challenged the Swedish State identity as a protagonist in gender equality and required changes that were interpreted as backlashes to Swedish equality policy development. These policy debates contributed to gendering public discourses on the EU as much as politicising further the EU. However, these controversial issues also bore innovative policy ideas for developing EC-norms further, such as introducing an obligatory “papa month” in the framework of the EC’s parental leave directive, or using the EU to introduce new supranational policy frameworks to combat issues such as trafficking in women” (Liebert, 2003).

Domestic bottle-necks can therefore be configured as easier in some cases, in others more difficult thus making the process of Europeanisation not much easy.

#### ***4.8 Europeanisation of Gender mainstreaming:***

“Taking Gender mainstreaming as a pan European strategy has been a consciously developed process. Following the footsteps of UN declaration on gender equality in 1995 Beijing conference, the European Commission set in motion strategy of Gender Mainstreaming and sought to use it as a tool to better understand the causes of inequalities between women and men in our societies and come up with appropriate strategies to tackle them” (European Commission 2004a). However, some researchers have argued that the progress in the existing gender equality policy has been limited, as a result of the narrow range of strategies that EU policy-makers have used (Rossilli, 2000). The initial concern to expand the EU regulation on gender equality beyond the labour market was due to that fact that “the EU gender equality framework was mainly derived from labour market, and it became clear to the EU that inequality falling outside the labour market still influenced it. In order to benchmark the divergent labor market and social policies of the member states, the EU therefore expanded its regulations outside of employment” (Kakucs 2009: 39).

Considering the limited nature of previous EU gender equality policies, Feminist scholars raise concern over how the values and objectives of gender mainstreaming can be broadened at the EU level.

Many researchers hold that Gender mainstreaming may be effective in reducing gender disparities only if it takes root at all levels of decision making (Liebert, 2002). Although EU’s framework for equal opportunity policy and the gender mainstreaming

paradigm share some similarities and differences, none the less the diffusion of gender mainstreaming approach across national boundaries constitutes various challenges. When in recent times “active public support for the EU is not strong, and the permissive consensus displayed by public opinion is shrinking, where diffusion of egalitarian values within domestic mass public is limited, and where translational agency and power resources for multilevel action coordination by gender policy and advocacy coalitions are not well developed” (ibid.), Europeanisation of gender mainstreaming seems to be limited by the following factors:

(i) While Gender mainstreaming strategy seeks to promote gender equality as a social value and norm by adopting various equitable programmes and measures, there are many European countries like Germany do not endorse equality between men and women as strongly as Sweden<sup>244</sup>.

(ii) As Gender mainstreaming departs from equal opportunity policy with respect to widening the equality policy frame and systematically expanding ideas about the broader structural and institutional causes of inequality and discrimination, it may collide with the existing ‘male breadwinner’ system that is rooted at the structural level reinforcing the gendered structure in many European society. For example, “German public policies...for instance the tax system, day care and schooling provisions, and parental leave allowances offer strong disincentives to women have paid employment.” (Liebert, 2002).

(iii) Besides, Gender mainstreaming unlike equal opportunity directives, does not rely on legal enforcement mechanism which the Commission may bring against the member states that do not fulfill their legal obligations. This has encouraged some feminists not to welcome mainstreaming wholeheartedly as a social and political innovation, but to see it instead as a “deception” (Woodward, 2001) or a ‘toothless’ rhetorical device for mobilising women’s support for the EU (Schunter-Kleemann, 2000: 31 et seq)<sup>245</sup>

(iv) Since Gender mainstreaming is committed to incorporate gender equality perspective into all the areas of public policies and do not exclusively deal with

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<sup>244</sup> Different European publics were asked if equality between men and women was considered to be a value that strengthen democracy, that made personal development easier and that improved human relationships.

<sup>245</sup> Cited in Liebert 2002: 242.

women's policies and positive measures for women, it seems to be challenging the role and status of organisations that are dedicated to women's and equal opportunities agencies. Therefore, the Nordic enlargement in 1995 that enhanced Gender mainstreaming in the EU institutions has by no means remained a Nordic policy approach.<sup>246</sup>

However, despite challenges and constraints of national gender regimes, and the lack of legally binding nature, gender mainstreaming has also begun to take roots in many European countries like in Italy. For example Germany reflects: "enthusiastic endorsements in some cases and creating resistance in others. The German experience with gender mainstreaming is- as in other EU member states- fairly recent starting only after the federal election in 1998 when, after 16 years of continuous rule, the Christian Democratic/Liberal government was replaced by a new coalition, headed by the Social Democrats and the Green Party"<sup>247</sup> In other words, the post-1998 federal government coalition created opportunities for gender mainstreaming to intumescence and transmute women's policy framework. There were attempts made by the German federal governments (until 1998) to shift the German gender regime from male breadwinner/female caretaker norms (which have frequently conflicted with the EC Norms) to a three phase reconciliation model. In the latter, women's employability becomes a new concern although with some traditional gender role expectations. After 1988, the federal government further attempted to legitimise the notion of 'working mother'. All these slow but ongoing reconstructions of gender roles in Germany have benefited from transnational exchanges and debates reflecting women's experiences especially from Sweden and all.

Researchers hold that gender mainstreaming can be widened through knowledge based inducements, i.e. "strategies and institutional settings that enhance the learning capability of public and private decision-makers"<sup>248</sup> In other words, Gender mainstreaming outspreads its ideas and values among general masses through knowledge-based instruments which in turn influence the native decision makers as well as civil society organisations like women's organisations, trade unions etc.

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<sup>246</sup> Gender mainstreaming made its way to the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1995 as part of accession of member states with advanced levels of gender equality, most prominently Sweden.

<sup>247</sup> In Germany, the level of institutionalising gender mainstreaming depends to a large extent on the type of parties in government and the type of regional government.

<sup>248</sup> Three sets of governance mechanisms can be distinguished that have promoted Europeanisation and domestic change in general: legal measures, material incentives and knowledge based inducements.

Unlike equal opportunities and equal treatment approach that draws on regulatory instruments and legal measures for their compliance, gender mainstreaming is more effective through integration, targeted initiatives and potential dialogue. In most of development discourse on gender mainstreaming, these three components are seen complimentary for bringing effective outcome. For example, “For SIDA, gender mainstreaming has the most success when two, or even all three components (integration, targeted interventions and dialogue) are simultaneously adopted. Indeed, dialogue tends to be the most effective when combined with financial incentives.”<sup>249</sup> However, these range of instruments that give impetus to gender mainstreaming “are conspicuously absent from EU regulatory policy. Depending on the EU policy sectors, mainstreaming advocates are engaged with, to some limited extent, financial incentives that can be operated for advancing mainstreaming, for instance, in structural, research and developmental programmes”(Liebert, 2003: 488).

Further, Open Method Coordination is also considered helpful in diffusing the values of gender mainstreaming as it involves impact assessments and monitoring by the Commission. The OMC is usually operated through ‘soft’ analytical, educational and consultative tools (Mazey, 2001: 16.) that includes “guides to gender impact assessment”, “flying experts” and “gender training”, or documenting “examples of best practice” in the field of equal opportunities for women and men (European Commission, 2000). All these are soft mechanisms that provide an edge to the decision makers in the EU to become more proactive in the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Based on various studies and findings, this chapter illuminates that a blending of domestic gender culture, state and social identities and distinct discursive frames function etc. strongly influence with respect to following EU norms. Besides, legal enforcement as well as elite pressure for promoting innovative ideas also led to gender policy change. However, in some cases, knowledge based tools, communication strategies and institutional environments provide an effective alternative to regulatory prescription and legal compliance. Considering all these factors, Alison Woodward expressed that in order to make gender mainstreaming more effective, women’s organisations and state feminist agencies should be required

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<sup>249</sup> See for more details see Liebert 2002.



to reframe their strategies in a threefold way : to actively engage in mobilising public concern and support, to build gender expertise and to foster the diffusion of innovative ideas (Woodward, 1999: 27).”<sup>250</sup>

This research holds that Europeanisation of gender mainstreaming involves a transnational processes of convergence towards shared norms and frameworks that do not necessarily like to keep homogeneity intact but which, can be implemented in a different societies and keeping it compatible with domestic diversity. For Liebert, “over the past 25 years, gender equality regimes in the member states have converged, but primarily in the direction of more diversity”(2003: 304).

Therefore, in search of the driving forces conducive to frame convergence, comparative Europeanisation research helps to a greater extent that goes beyond the narrower focus of legal compliance and legislative implementation and that engage with a whole range of environmental, cognitive and agency related factors ( Duina, 1997; Haas, 1998). As such any individual model of gender equality policy in this case Sweden, though with all its progressive and radical innovations, seems likely to be implemented at the EU level through a knowledge based tools, communication strategies and institutional environments, in other words through ‘soft’ approach of the EU. And in case of Gender mainstreaming, the EU has relied “exclusively on soft incentives in its implementation of gender mainstreaming, with highly variable results after over a decade” (Pollack, and Hafner, 2000).

#### **4.9 Conclusion:**

The chapter summarises possibilities and challenges of emulating Swedish model of gender equality policy at the European level. Analysis pertaining to various features and characteristics of Swedish welfare state that underscores it is made as they provide the ground for projecting Sweden as a unique model. Besides this, the world cultural value system also has been discussed as to understand the world position that Sweden holds. This helps in understanding why Sweden has been dealing with basic parameters of human rights so well.

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<sup>250</sup> Cited in Liebert 2002: 252.

Sharing the Swedish experience of gender equality policy at the European level involves various issues. Although Sweden has substantially contributed to EU affairs pertaining to its reports, strategies etc. and Swedish delineation of gender equality policy has been highly appreciated as a progressive model by the European Union, emulating and practicing it at the European level may not seem possible. Swedish model may go through lot of challenges because of national and supranational factors. However, the chapter substantiates that despite resistance and challenges Swedish model can be emulated at the EU level through a knowledge based tools, communication strategies and institutional environments, in other words through ‘soft’ approach of the EU.

### **Gender Equality in Sweden: An Empirical Analysis**

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So far an attempt was made to explore various aspects and characteristics of the Swedish gender equality policy that mark it as one of the most progressive policy. The previous chapter puts forth the rationale as to why the Swedish gender equality framework is so unique and is worth emulating by the rest of the European countries. The chapter analyses the inherent socio-cultural factors in Swedish society that led to the progress of distinct gender equality policy in Sweden. In addition to this, the chart of world cultural map by Ingle Hart and Wezel is also being analysed for developing a detailed understanding of issues pertaining to gender equality approach in Sweden. The previous chapter also talks about the possibilities and challenges at the EU level that may hinder in the process of sharing good practices of Swedish model.

However, it is in this context that this chapter sets in and seeks to investigate the ground reality through an empirical analysis on gender equality and gender mainstreaming approach in Sweden. In other words, it seeks to testify the premises on which this research is based.

In order to identify the ground reality, the research takes up two of its significant research tools i.e., (i) interview and (ii) survey technique, in order to accomplish the findings. Random samples of 112 research scholars were taken from the University of Uppsala for conducting the survey. Additionally, a range of around 20 academic scholars, bureaucrats, civil society groups were chosen as the respondents for the interview. The gathered information collected through this empirical analysis has been used as primary source for this research. The respondents who became part of this empirical study contain general people, policymakers, academicians, students who directly or indirectly get influenced or impacted by Swedish gender equality policy framework.

The interviews and survey were conducted during the months of April-May 2014<sup>251</sup> in Sweden (Uppsala, Stockholm, Linköping); Belgium (Brussels), France (Paris, Bordeaux). Despite time constraints, the interviews conducted and responses generated were rich in quality and content, and an in-depth analysis was also attempted through this.

The interviews were conducted to gather information and explore opinions regarding various issues and aspects of gender-mainstreaming, its usage and differences at the policy and ground level. While the issue of gender inequality is a universal problem and is existent in Sweden to some extent, nonetheless, the solution for bringing gender equality through gender mainstreaming has been most effective in Sweden. Although gender mainstreaming was not much familiar term for the general people because of its English connotation and also for its association with the policy making process, most people have benefited from it. The Swedish gender equality policy along with various policy instruments has been creating conducive ground for gender mainstreaming to work effectively. The gender mainstreaming strategy seeks to bring transformation in gender relations by deconstructing the structural causes of gender inequality within family and outside. The transformation in gender relations is sought to be achieved through sharing responsibility within family by involving men into in caring and household responsibilities, therefore initiating a new gender discourse based on redistribution of resources, rights and responsibilities.

Besides the people who were part of interview process, a survey is taken up containing people who are part of Swedish society like research scholars and students who have experienced gender equality aspect in their family or in their surroundings. Their perspectives therefore become the primary narrative for this research. In order to gauge the response of every actor and stakeholder in the event, the respondents were categorised in to two groups:

(i)First Group: contains students and research scholars who form the valuable respondents for the survey.

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<sup>251</sup> From 1<sup>st</sup> April to 27<sup>th</sup> April the study was carried out through interviews with academicians, researchers, students, teachers, and general people in Uppsala, Stockholm and in Linköping. From 28<sup>th</sup> April to 14<sup>th</sup> May the research was carried out through interviews with the policy makers in Brussels, Belgium and also through an international conference in Bordeaux, France where I met several more researchers and policy makers and received their responses through presentation, discussion etc.

(ii) Second Group: contains policy makers, bureaucrats, academicians and civil society people who form the respondents for the interview process.

The purpose of categorising the respondents into two categories is to gather perspectives from wide range of stakeholders across the domain who could share their diverse experiences. Questioning just one set of respondents would have rendered one-sided or a partial view on the matter. As the sample involved various stakeholders and from across domains, one can be sure of the degree of reliability and objectivity of responses as the data represents diverse opinions and an insight into every aspect of the phenomena rather than offering just being uni-dimensional approach.

Two set of separate questionnaires were prepared for the aforesaid respondents. The questionnaires included both open, and closed ended questions in order to generate both quantitative and qualitative data. The open ended questions gave the respondent the freedom to express his/her opinion while close ended options were given in order to substantiate a consolidated percentage of responses from the respondents on the issues pertaining to this research. The first set contains a survey questionnaire (APPENDIX: Questionnaire 1) that was prepared for the first group of respondents. The set of questionnaire was closed ended and structured in nature and was directed to respondents who reflect upon the social mindset of Swedish society and also about what is happening at the ground level with respect to gender equality approach. The respondents selected for the survey was asked to share their personal experience on various aspects of their life narrate how they perceive the matter of gender equality in Swedish society. The second set of questionnaire was prepared to seek information from the second group (See APPENDIX: Questionnaire 2). The questionnaire were mainly open ended and semi-structured in nature involving questions pertaining to the core areas of gender-mainstreaming and its related issues in the policy discourse in the EU and Sweden.

In sum, although two set of questionnaire were directed to separate group of respondents for their diverse opinions, the underlying aim was to analyse, to what extent the inclusion of gender mainstreaming into social and economic policies brought transformation in the gender relations and also in the social mindset in Sweden. Besides, the purpose was also to explore how far this strategy has been successful in reducing gender inequality and to what extent Swedish experience of gender mainstreaming can be emulated at the European level.

## 5.1 PART A: Analysis of Survey

The survey was based upon random stratified sampling method through which perspectives of general people on gender equality aspect in Sweden was sought to receive. The nature of respondents was part of convenience sample because of availability of the same. In order to receive a systematic response a closed ended questionnaire was used for the survey. (Please find questionnaire attached in Appendix: 1).

The survey was conducted in the University of Uppsala, Sweden during the field study in Sweden. The set of respondents included research scholars and students studying in various departments in the University of Uppsala, Sweden. The rationale for choosing the sample is that the Uppsala University contains the large base of Swedish student population and hence it was easier to reach out to them in such a short span of time. Moreover, because of constraints over time, space and language (Swedish), reaching out to wider Swedish population was not possible. Besides, there are two more reasons behind choosing the sample: First, as the objective of the research is to see whether various social and economic policy initiatives could bring changes in gender relations within family with respect to sharing gender roles between men and women specially in matters of care work and household responsibilities, the convenience sample were being used as a gateway to reach out to their own families and parents and what they do in their own lives when it comes to sharing gender role responsibilities at home. This will help in reflecting the general mindset of people towards gender issues. Second: knowing the perspectives of the respondents who are mostly young research scholars and students can add value to the research as it would help in knowing the perspective of contemporary academicians, whose views and values might shape future policy makers and experts or ordinary citizens.

During the survey; a total number of 112 respondents were provided with a set of structured questionnaire. Out of these 112 respondents 65 were female and 47 male. In order to understand the nature of respondents, the first attempt was to know the age and sex profile of the respondents. Share of female and male population among the total respondents is 58% and 42% respectively. Majority of respondents in this survey were research scholars and students in the Uppsala University studying in various

departments and fall between the age group of 18-32 years. Out of this, 47.32% percent of total respondents belong to the age group of 18-22 years, whereas 45.53% fall within the age group of 23-27 years and the rest which happened to be a miniscule group of 7% fall in the age group of 28-32. The following figure represents such details of the respondents:

Figure: 5.1(a) Age and Sex Composition of the Respondents

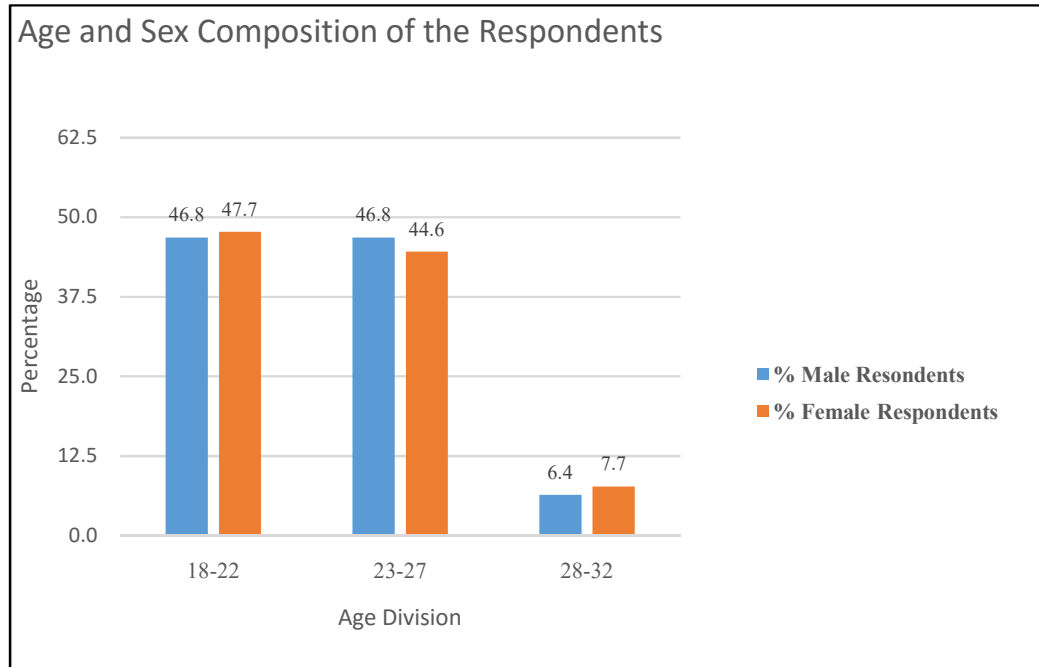
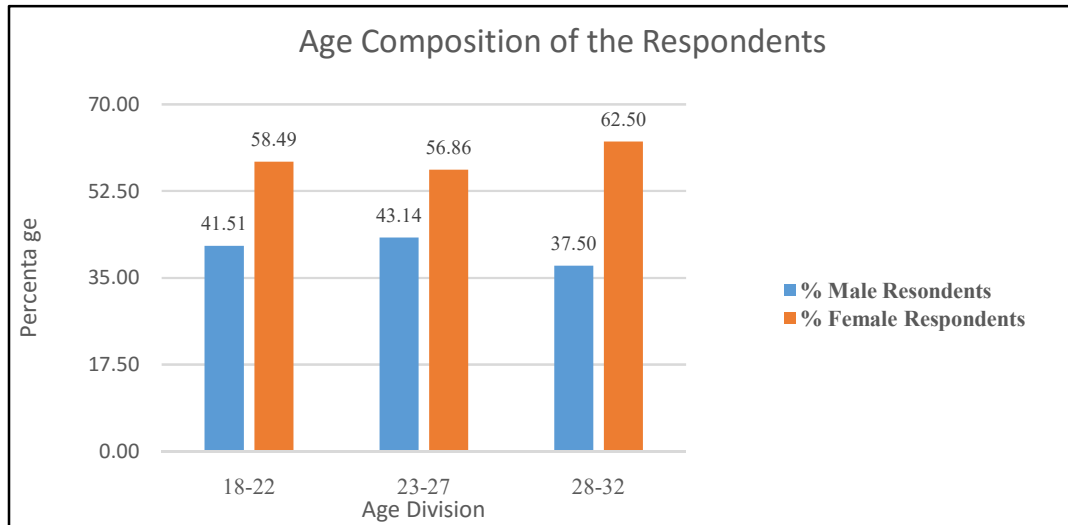


Figure 5.1(a) reflects the age profile of respondents corresponding to their sex group. Of the 58% total female respondents, the share of female in the age group of 18-22, 23-27 and 28-32 is 47.7%, 44.6% and 7.7% respectively. Similarly, among 42% of total male respondents the share of male in the age group of 18-22, 23-27 and 28-32 is 46.8%, 46.8% and 6.4% respectively. Further segregation was made for respondents with respect to the ratio of male to female and their overall composition within each age group so that a clear picture of age composition is formed in our mind for the clarity of research findings and proper analysis. It has been shown in Fig. 5.1(b) below.

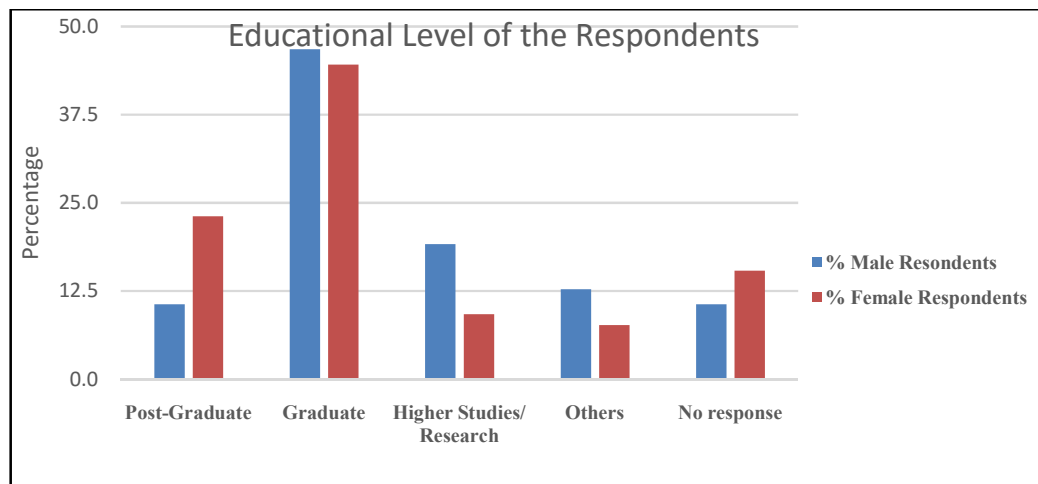
Figure: 5.1(b) Age composition of respondents (comparison of male & female in different age group)



Since the survey was conducted in a University area and all the respondents happened to be students only, the survey cannot claim to be representative sample of Swedish society as whole but of Uppsala University's students' opinion in particular or Swedish youth in general.

Further the question about their education level yielded the following result represented through another graph shown in Figure. 5.2(a).

Figure: 5.2(a) Education level of Respondents

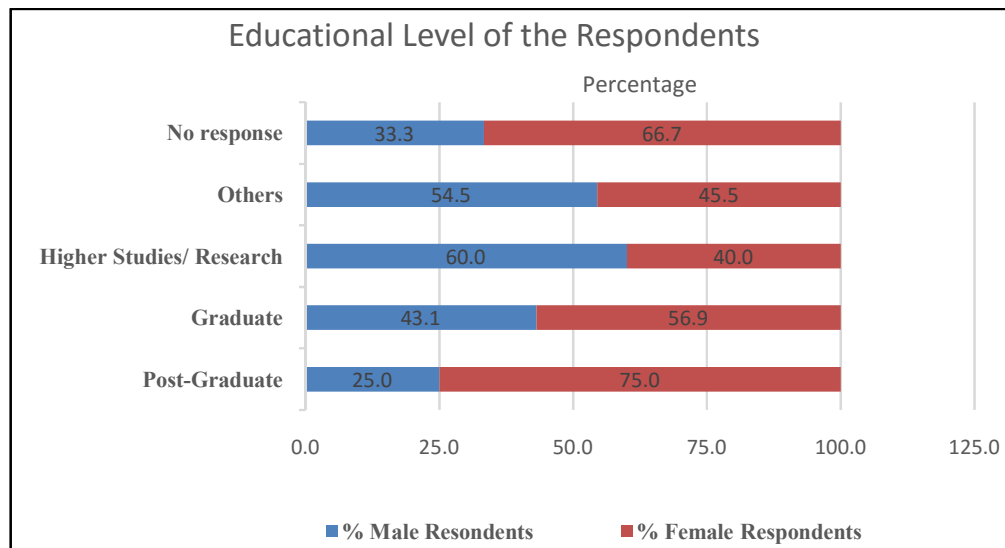




The education level of all respondents are represented in the Fig. 5.2(a) corresponding to their sex group. Majority of the students happened to be Graduates constituting more than 50% of the respondents. Among females approximately 44% were Graduates and 23% were Post-Graduates, whereas people with higher qualification above Post Graduates consisted of only 9% approximately compared to 19% males with such education level.

Therefore, the data clearly speaks for Graduates and probably shows lesser representation of women in higher studies in general in Sweden, as the percentage of female who responded were 85% in comparison to their male counterpart whose corresponding figure was 89% approximately and given the fact that the actual number of women exceeded by 50%. This fact is further ascertained when the corresponding figure of female in Graduate and Post Graduate is considered. It is found that females' number till Post Graduate level is way higher than their male counterpart. The Fig. 5.2(b) compares the corresponding education level between male and female which ascertain the above given analysis.

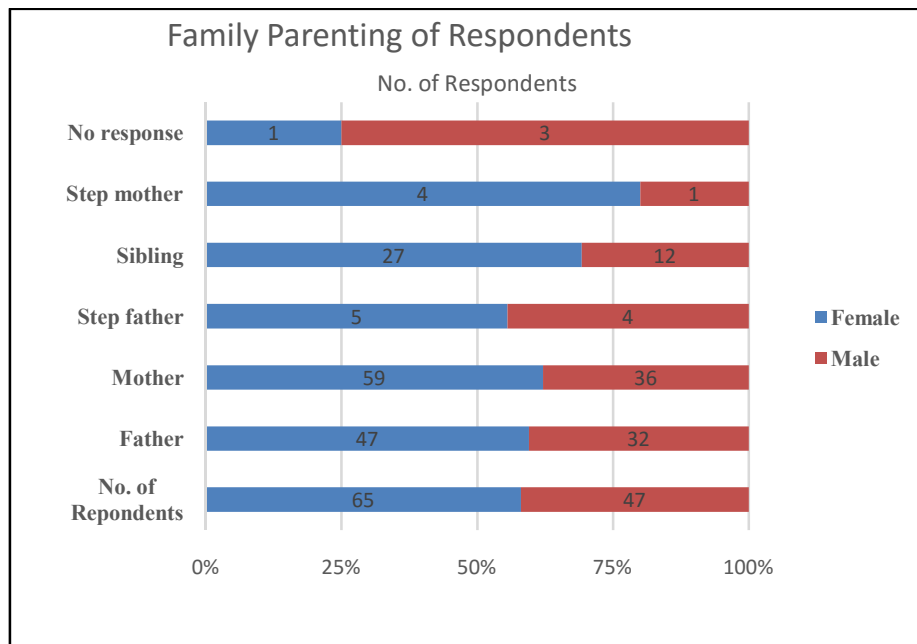
Figure: 5.2(b) Education Level of the Respondents (comparison of corresponding figures in male and female).



During the survey, the initial query of the research was to know the structural composition of family in Sweden in terms of who all constitute a usual family. The responses received reflect a mixed outcome which is shown in the Fig. 5.3 below. Unlike other societies, the Swedish society is more progressive and radical in terms of

relationship. One can find couples who enter into various types of relationships, like Living together, Co-habitation, Living Apart Together, Married, Single parent family etc. and any children born out of such relationship is never considered illegal which is unlikely for many other societies. However, the nature of relationship in Swedish society is fragile as well, as is reflected from rising cases of single parent, divorcee, and separated. Hence all these status influence a lot in bringing up of children in Swedish society. The concept of an ideal family which contains father, mother, and sibling is not much usual in Sweden. Here, in most cases the children experience to live with step father, or step mother, or the step siblings. All these reasons also provide a ground for sharing responsibility at home. The sense of keeping the gender role balanced is so high in Swedish society that men's involvement in care work and household responsibilities are taken in very natural way.

Figure: 5.3 Family Parenting of Respondents



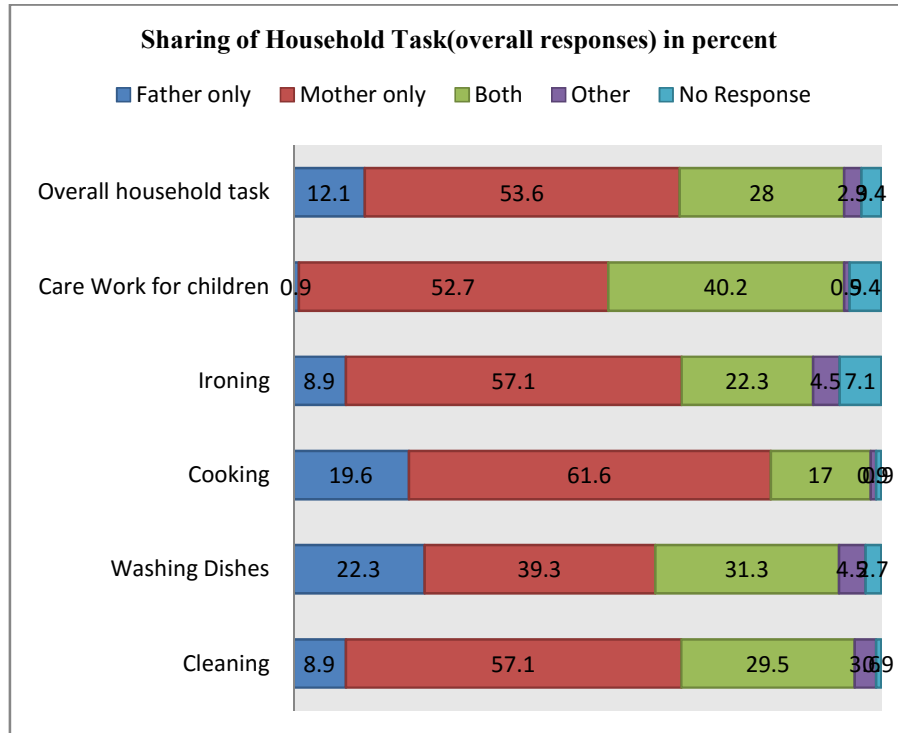
The purpose of some questions was to explore such dynamic relationships and to reach out to families of these respondents, to explore whether stereotyped gender roles have been challenged so far. The Fig. 5.3 above represents families where children grow up not only with their real parents but step parents as well. As evident majority of the respondents live with their mother and father. The female respondents are more in numbers than their male counterparts in terms of living with both parents.

However, the percentage for living with step mother and step father etc. is lesser in numbers. Out of these, a meager 3.5% of respondents gave no response in terms of parenting status.

Pertaining to the issue of gender equality with respect to equal division of work at home is shown in Figure 5.4. An attempt was made to know about who among the family member does most of the household responsibility and to what extent men are involved in sharing responsibility in care work and household tasks at home. The household tasks included in the survey were Cleaning, Washing Dishes, Cooking, Ironing and Care Work for Children. The following Figures 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6 represent the overall responses, the responses of only female members, and responses of male members respectively. Among all 17% preferred not to answer in one or the other task, mostly for “Ironing” and “Care work for Children”.

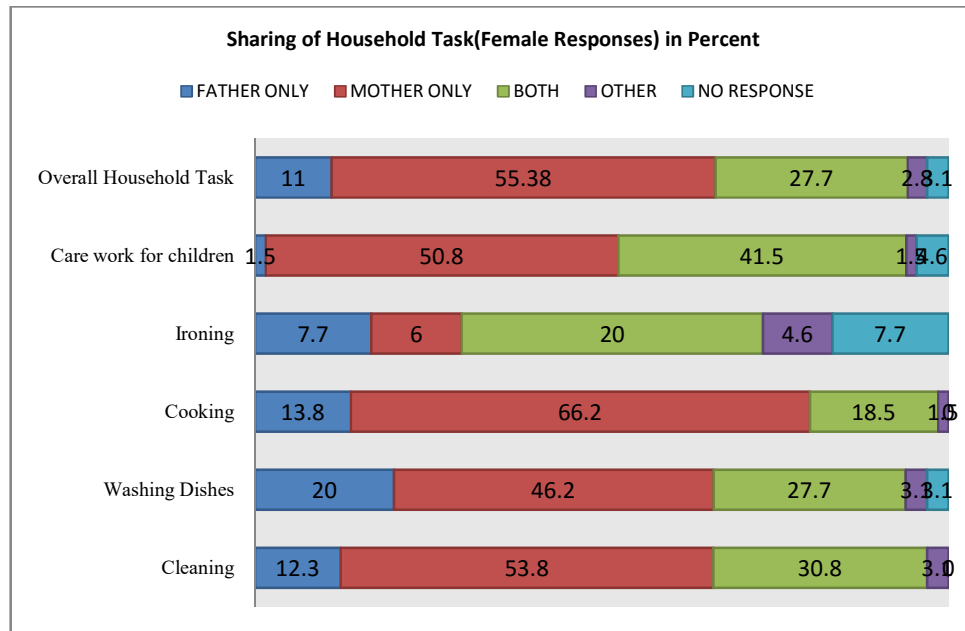
An overwhelming response was received demonstrating the increase of men’s involvement in the traditionally defined feminine area. The response shows a positive pattern of men being an agent for bringing fair division of household tasks at home and seem to be deconstructing the concept of ‘home maker’ where it is not only woman who is a home maker. Men seem to be increasingly accepting and altering the role of home maker making their own involvement in cleaning, washing dishes, cooking, Ironing, and care work for children. Among the total number of respondents, overall 28% stated that both parents participated in these given household tasks. Many accepted that there were some tasks performed by fathers only. 29% agreed that both parents participated in “Cleaning”, 31.25% agreed that both parents did the “washing dishes”, 17% said so for “cooking”, 22.32% for “ironing”, and 40% agreed in favour of both for “care work for children”.

Figure: 5.4(a) Overall participation of family members in Household Tasks (in Percentage).



Differences were noticed in the responses between male and female respondents with respect of sharing household tasks. These responses are put up in Fig. 5.4(b) (reflects female response only) and Fig. 5.4(c) (reflects male response only). From the comparison it shows that, when 27.7% female respondent agreed that both parents participated in the household task, the male response in this case was 28.5%. Out of these 41.5% female and 38.3% male respondent stated in favour of both parents when it comes to care work of children. It shows that care work to a large extent and other tasks to some extent are being shared fairly between men and women. Further, the male respondents confirm that 14.9% cooking done by both parents, whereas female respondents confirm it to 18.46%. Cooking was found to be least shared task at home, whereas caring work for children is considered as the most shared task according to both male and female respondents.

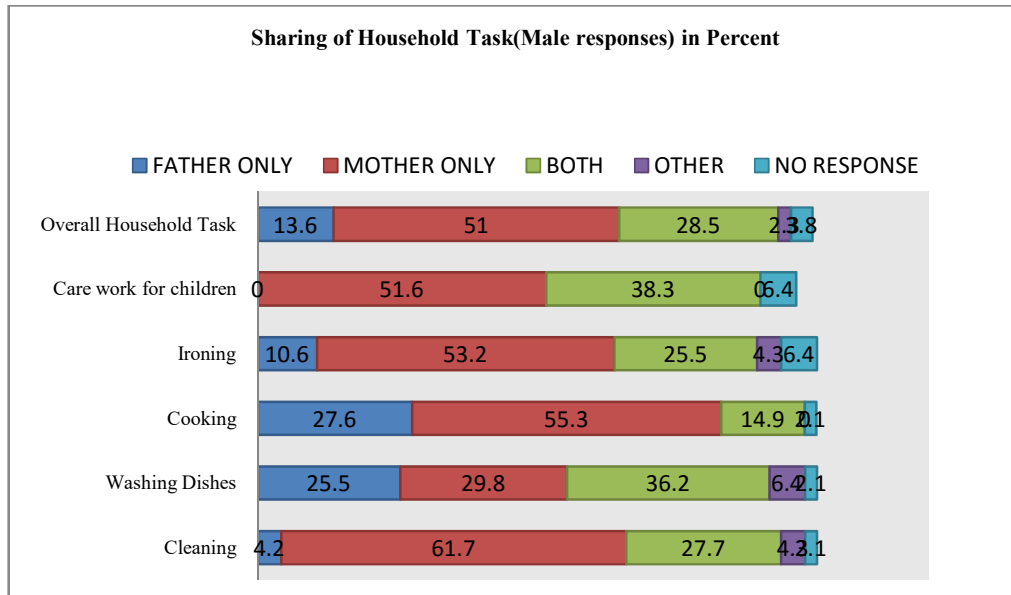
Figure: 5.4(b) Sharing of Household Tasks (Female Responses in %)



According to female respondents, the tasks shared by both parents in their ascending order is cooking, ironing, cleaning, and washing dishes and care work for children. The same for male goes like cooking, ironing, washing dishes, cleaning and care work for children. 42% of male respondents answered in affirmative of their father's involvement in household tasks (found by adding 'father only' performed task and task performed by both parents). For female respondents 38.76% stated in favour of their father's involvement in household tasks.

A parity between male and female respondents is visible while comparing their responses. Analysing all the responses we can see a trend of men's growing involvement in transforming gender relations and bringing fair gender equality within family. However, there is still a long way to go as women are still carrying out majority of share in the family with respect to unpaid work. Moreover, although men's involvement in sharing responsibility is on the rise, the degree of responsibility differs with respect to different kinds of household tasks.

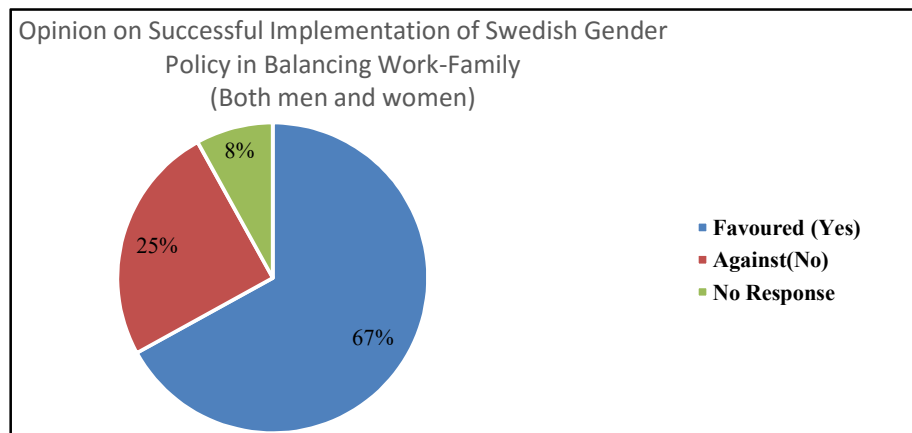
Figure: 5.4(c) Sharing of Household Tasks (Male Responses in %)



In addition to this, the data shows that in majority of houses, the responsibility largely rests on females or mothers. However, availability of highly technological innovations like washing machine, dish washer, laundry, life become little easier for women and men also do not show much reluctance to extend their helping hands. The concept of ‘manual work’ is almost done away with technology friendly Sweden which also contributes to balancing work-family situation for both men and women.

The next query was to explore the opinion about whether Swedish Gender Equality Policy has been successful in balancing work-family responsibilities: The responses show a divided opinion about the outcome of Swedish gender equality policy. The Figure.5.5 (a) represents those opinions. Figure: 5.5 (a): Opinion on Successful implementation of Swedish Gender Policy for balancing work and family

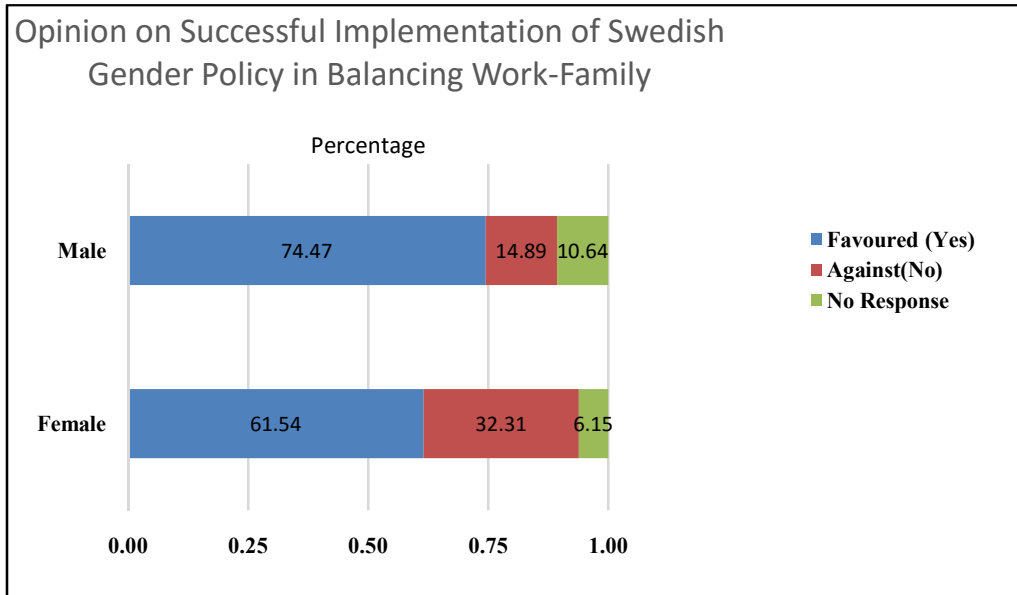
From Figure. 5.5 (a), it is evident that the Swedish Gender Equality Policy is quite



popular among Swedish citizens. Most of the respondents of around 67% consider it to be successfully contributing to balancing their work-family responsibility. Nonetheless, male and female respondents slightly differ with respect to their perspectives on this matter. A fair number of women, than men, think that Swedish gender equality policy has not contributed substantially in balancing work-family situation. This reflects the difference of expectation and perception of gender equality between men and women. Out of all the respondents, 67% agreed that the Swedish Gender Policy has been able to keep the work-family life balanced to a large extent by involving men into traditional gender role tasks and reducing burden on women and in maintaining balance between personal and family responsibilities. Many respondents stated positively and expressed their happiness with statements like: “it’s nice to see father out with babies, its different and unusual for me”. However, there were respondents who were still apprehensive about the policy. Some of the respondents spelled out that, “women still have more responsibility in the family”, and “responsibility for children” and also acknowledged that the gender equality policy inadequate and there is much left to be done.

Respondents were expecting more improvement in the gender equality policy saying that, “there is a lot more to do such as making household and care work more equal.” They reasoned out that “the work culture in Sweden is not always considerate to men who want to spend time with children in the evening after working long hours”. They also stated that “men do not spend time with children as much as women do when they have a baby, women are supposed to be at home more and cannot make a big career”. However, some of the respondents were very much hopeful also. They hold that, “the gender equality is much better than 40 years ago and I hope it will continue”. Some respondents hold that Swedish gender equality policy is “better than many countries and though we are not there yet, we’re on the right track”.

Figure: 5.5(b) Opinion on Successful implementation of Swedish Gender Policy in Balancing work-family (gender wise segregation) in percent.



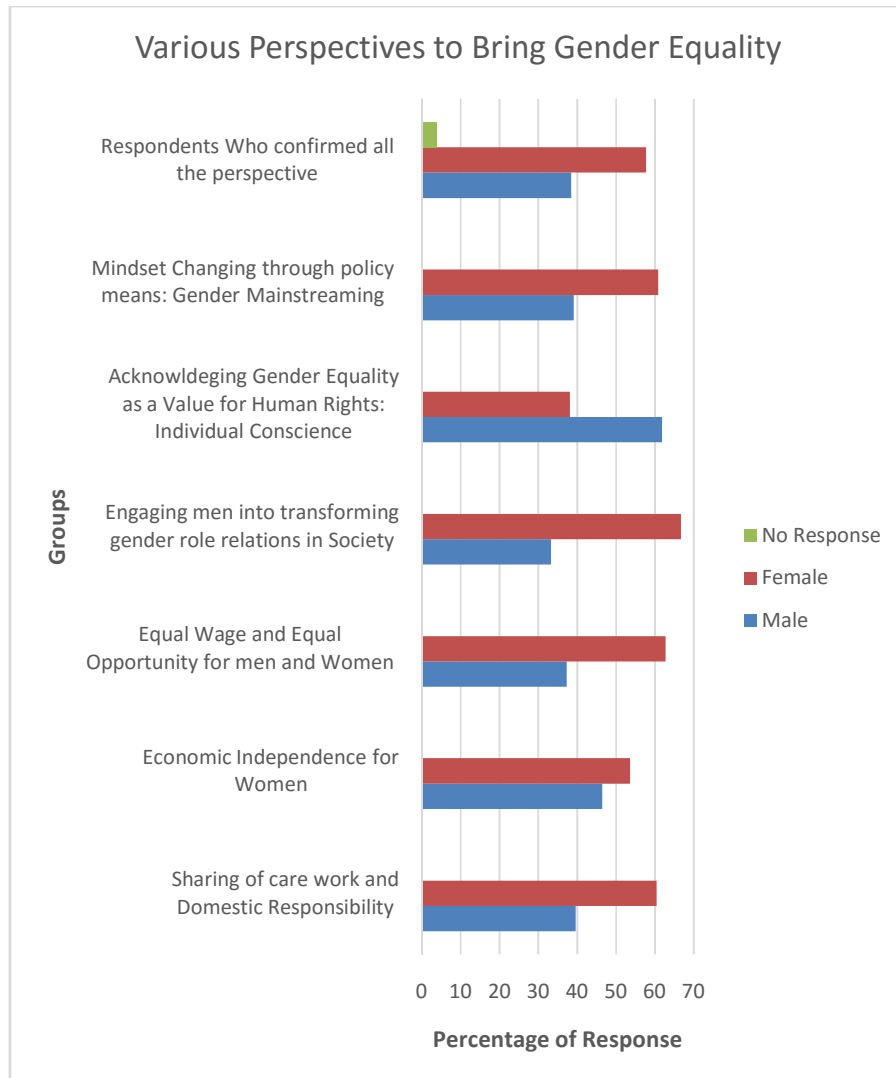
Besides locating their experience on gender equality in form of sharing responsibilities at home, questions were posed to know their opinion on what could be the best possible means through which gender equality could be achieved. Fig. 5.6 contains some of such indicative options and the respondents were asked to tick the most effective solution from among the choices. The indicative options are (I) Sharing domestic work and responsibilities within the family; (ii) Economic independence for women; (iii) Equal wage/equal work for men and women; (iv) Engaging men more into transforming gender role relations in the society; (v) Considering Gender Equality as value for Human Rights; and (vi) Changing mindset through deconstruction of gender role behaviour.

The responses were diverse in nature. Around 12% of the respondents thought all these options are equally important to achieve Gender Equality. One percent did not respond to this question. Around 27.4% of respondents favoured 'equal wage and equal opportunity for women and men' as the ultimate solution beside those who opted for all. The corresponding figure for this options in case of female and male are 29.6% and 24.7% respectively. Majority of respondents have equivocally opted for this solution for gender equality. 'Sharing of care work and domestic responsibility' is



also considered as one of the best practices to bring gender equality. Around 20% female and 19% male respondents have shown their support by favouring it.

Figure: 5.6 Various perspective to bring gender equality (In percent).



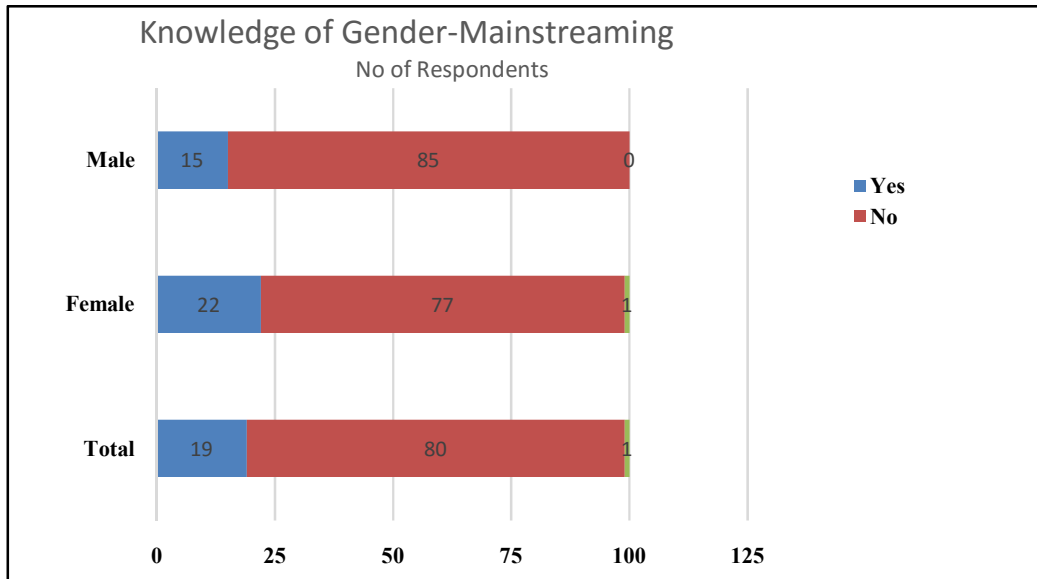
Rest of the given solutions towards gender equality within family also had received much support from overall respondents. As can be seen from Fig. 5.6, around 7% among all the respondents show their concern for ‘engaging men into transforming gender role relations in the society’, followed by the option of ‘mindset changing through deconstruction of gender role behaviour’ which received 10.7%

response from among all the respondents. In the survey questionnaire this option is considered equivalent to gender mainstreaming.

All the responses show a little overlapping of all the solutions which is around 12% which means that 12% of all the respondents opted in favour of all. Overall, all the responses show a positive trend towards the preferred solutions and it is evident from the responses, that people in Swedish society are gradually moving towards accepting all these aforesaid solutions as a means to achieve gender equality.

While this empirical study attempted to explore whether people are aware of Gender-mainstreaming in Sweden, the responses were mixed. Most of the respondents as much as 80% of them had no idea what gender mainstreaming is and only 18% knew about it. This information appears to be more significant when seen in the background of the respondents. As most of the respondents are either graduates, post graduates or research scholars, they can be considered as one of the most well informed section of society, therefore lacking in information and knowledge about gender mainstreaming may indicate that gender-mainstreaming strategy is still a new terminology or not very well published/advertised so that it enters into the public discourse and is not yet debated enough. The existing literature also shows that gender mainstreaming is not much familiar among the Swedish people because of its English origin. The Swedish word for gender mainstreaming is “Jämställdhetsintegrering”. However, it may be a reason that because of its English usage in the Survey, most of the respondents could not identify with the same and so is such a low response on its familiarity and awareness. Such ignorance may also happen due to the fact that gender mainstreaming is a policy tool or a strategy to address gender inequality and is being used usually by the policy makers in various policies for inclusion of gender perspective. In Sweden gender equality policy is being designed in a way to reinforce gender equality through various programmes, initiatives and practices like sharing equal parental leave, sharing household tasks, care work etc. It could be therefore one such reason that as people takes all these initiatives and practices usually in a natural manner, majority of population may not aware with its socio-political implication and how is it seen in the policy discourse which is why such ignorance may have reflected in given responses.

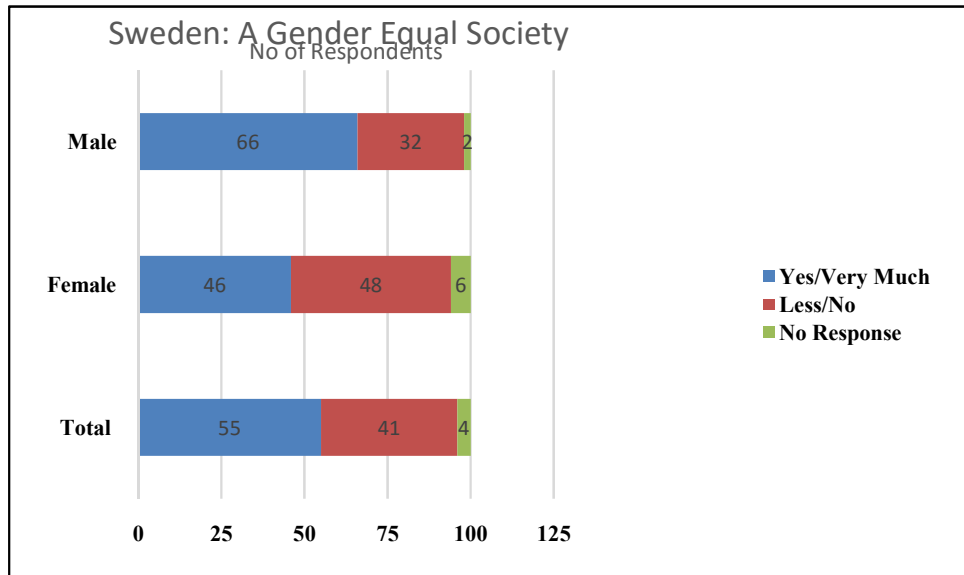
Figure: 5.7 Knowledge of Gender-Mainstreaming (In percent).



The next query was to explore the degree of gender equality in Sweden to which the respondents differed in their opinions. The purpose was to understand to what extent Sweden is gender equal as compare to other European countries. To this end, Sweden along with some other European Countries like France, Spain, Germany were set along the scale of 1 to 10, in which, 1 represents least gender equality and 10 represents maximum gender equality. Figure 35 reflects the opinions for each country.

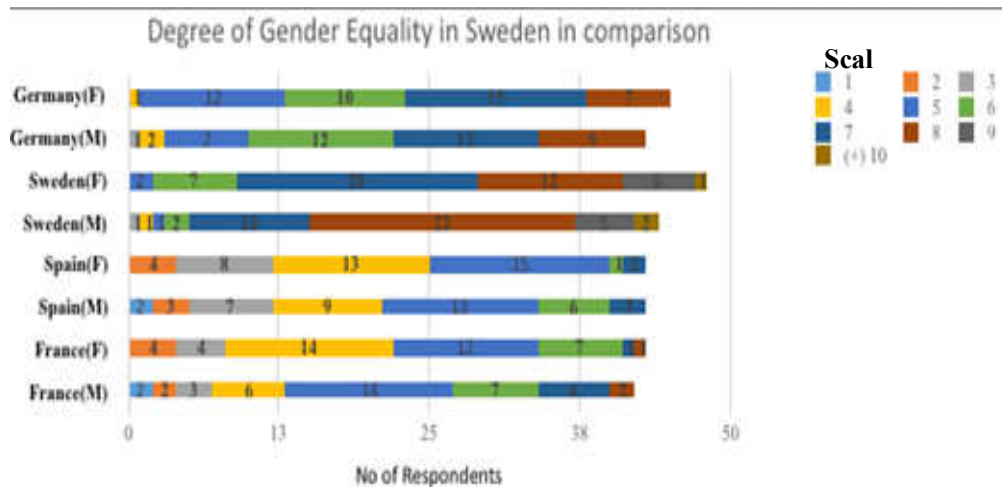
To the question whether Sweden is a Gender equal society or not, more than half around 55% of the respondents answered affirmatively. However, 41% respondents disagree with this. Almost all the respondents whether answering positively or negatively were found to be very optimistic and were convinced about the fact that Sweden has been following a better path or direction in order to bring greater gender equality in its society. However, most of the respondents hold that Sweden has to some extent achieved gender equality and it has a long way to go and much more to achieve in this regard.

Figure: 5.8 Sweden is a Gender Equal Society (%)



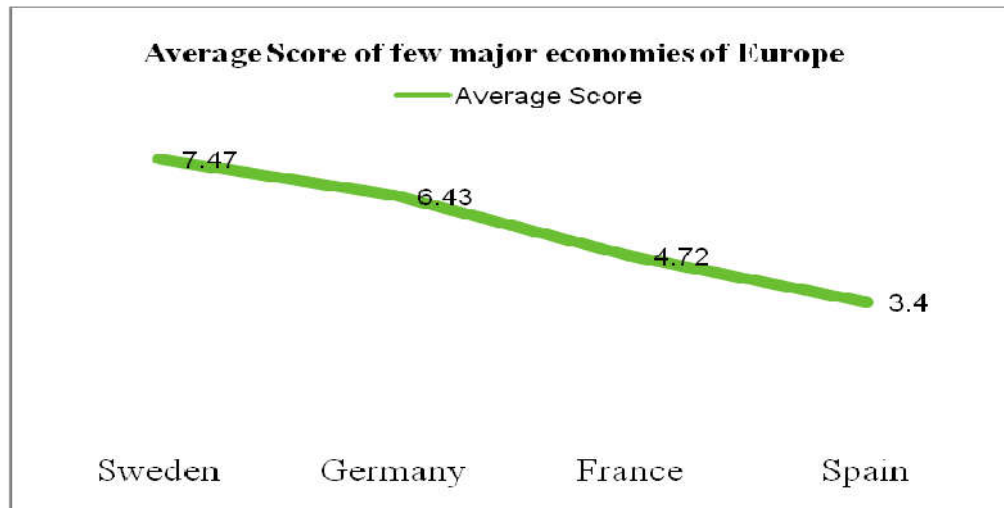
Majority of respondents rated Sweden as the most gender equal country in comparison to three of its European counterparts. The average score of Sweden is marked as 7.47 indicating highest level of gender equality among the nations under comparison here. The overall response underlines the effort and seriousness that Sweden has shown in order to bridge the gender gap. Most of the respondents mark it above 5 on the scale of 1-10 with majority of respondents marking the score as 7, 8 and 9 and only a miniscule percentage gave the score below 5. The overall response for Sweden shows a progressive trend of Swedish society towards gender equality and its support among people. With respect to male and female respondents, the average score stands 7.61 and 7.33 respectively which means acknowledging Sweden as highly gender equal society is higher among male respondents than their female counterparts.

Figure: 5.9(a) Gender Equality in Sweden in comparison to other European countries



Sweden is followed by Germany for which the respondents have given an average score of 5 on the scale of 1-10. Thus, Germany’s overall score stands 6.43 which is just below Sweden. This shows that Germany is relatively in a better position than France and Spain with respect to gender equality. The responses reflect a positive trend for German society for its efforts to pursue for a better gender equal society. Majority of respondents have scored Germany as 5, 6, 7, and 8 on the scale of 1-10. With respect to male and female respondents, the average score stands 6.53 and 6.33 respectively.

Figure: 5.9(b) Average Score of Four Major Economies of Europe

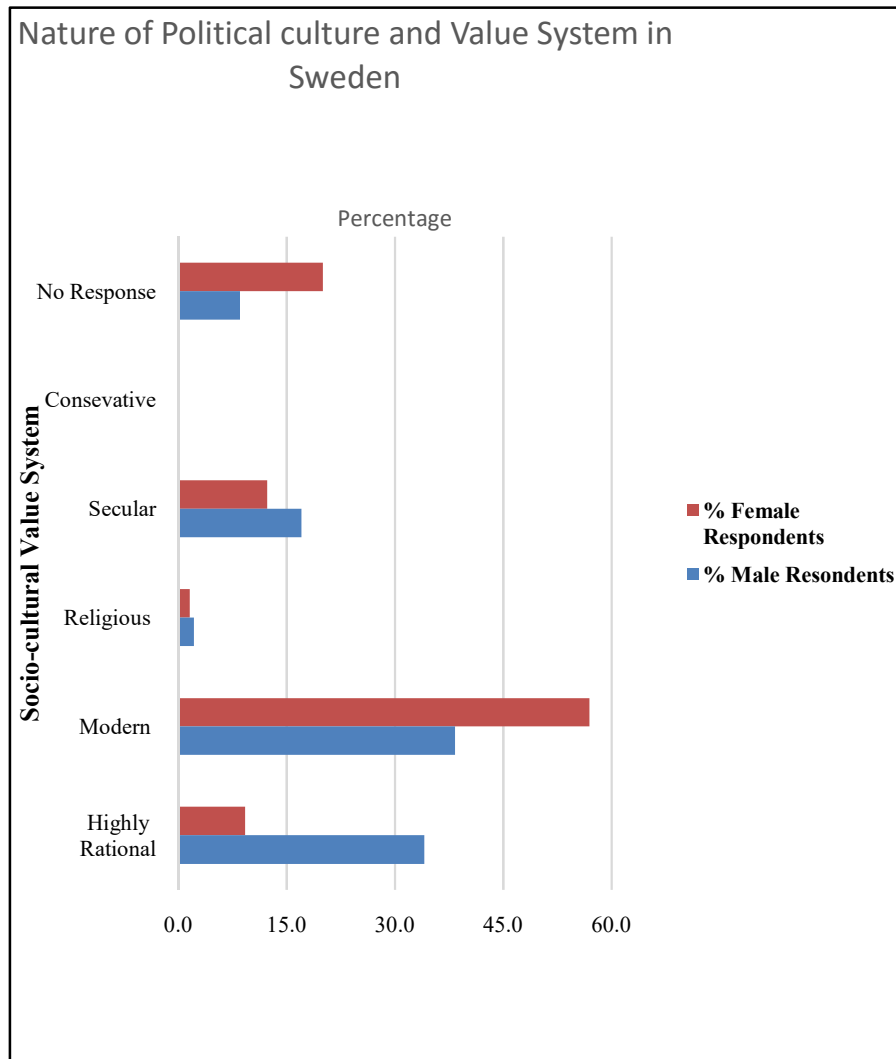


Out of the total respondents, majority have marked France as an average society in terms of gender equality. In the scale of 1-10 where 10 represents highly gender equal society and 1 represents least gender equal society, it received an average score of 4.72. There is a stark difference over the issue of gender equality in France among the respondents. While 3.5% of the total respondents have given France as high score of 8, majority hold France as gender unequal society scoring it only less as 1 on the scale of 1-10. With respect to male and female respondents, the average score stands 4.97 and 4.48 respectively.

The overall responses put Spain in a very poor light. Most of the respondents graded Spain as below average with respect to its achievement towards gender equality. Spain is marked as least gender equal society with an overall score of 3.4 on the scale of 1-10. With respect to male and female respondents, the average score stands 2.65 and 4.16 respectively. This shows greater degree of inequality among sexes in Spain as compare to other European countries.

The aforesaid analysis is useful to explore the relative differences each country is making with respect to bringing gender equality. The differences over their position may be due to the presence of unique socio-cultural, economic and political set up of each country. The greater response in favour of Sweden being the most gender equal country may be associated with the fact that Sweden has been considered as a 'Modern and highly rational society (See Fig. 5.10), in which self expression, individualism, de-sexualisation of women, treating gender equality as human rights value is given utmost importance and considered as essential elements for the sustaining a social democratic welfare state like Sweden. An overwhelming response was put forth by the respondents on the nature of political culture and values system in Sweden, considering Sweden being a Modern (57% by female and 38% by male) society followed by its status as 'highly rational' (9% by female and 34% by male) and a 'secular' (12% by female and 17% by male respondents) country. Significantly, religious factors did not receive much importance among the respondents in defining the nature of political culture and value system in Sweden. Lack of religious influence over the social and political affairs could be one of the reasons why values of self-expression, individualism, de-sexualisation of women, recognising gender equality as human rights are usual phenomena in Swedish society unlike other European societies. The ongoing transformation in gender role relations within family is a reflection of all such values inculcated by the Swedish society.

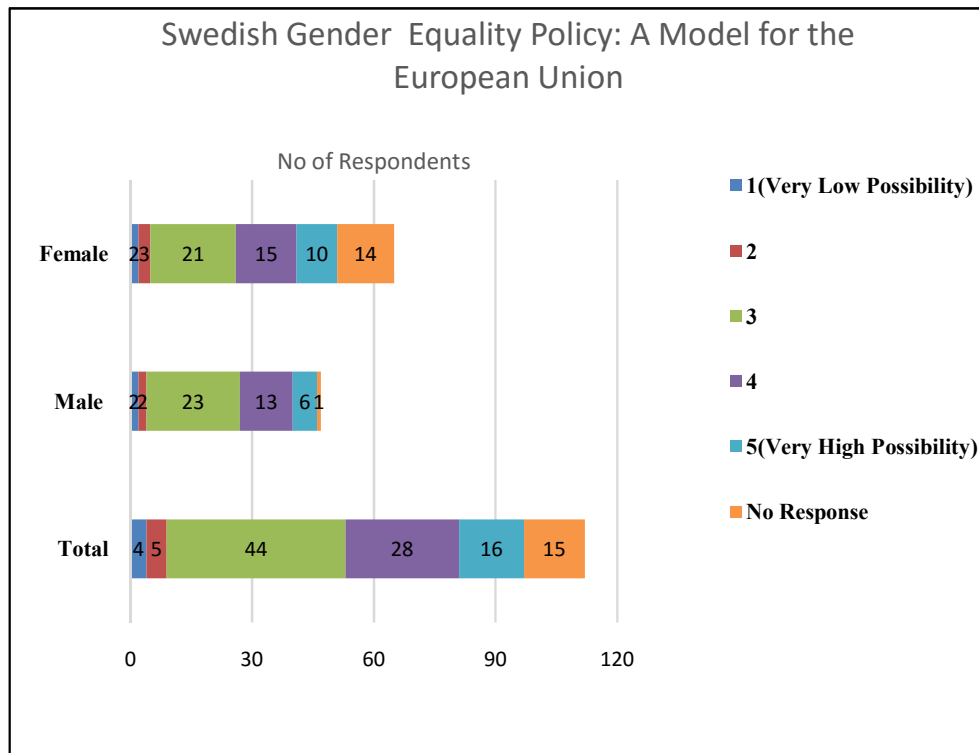
Figure: 5.10 Nature of Political culture and Value System in Sweden (%).



Exploring all the issues and aspects of gender equality in Sweden, a significant query was to know whether Swedish gender equality policy could be emulated by the European Union and to what extent it can be shared or adopted by other European countries. To this end, the respondents were asked to mark their opinion on a scale of 1-5 in which 1 represents very low possibility and 5 represents high possibility. The responses are shown in Fig. 5.11 below.



Figure: 5.11 Swedish Gender Equality Policy: A Model for the European Union



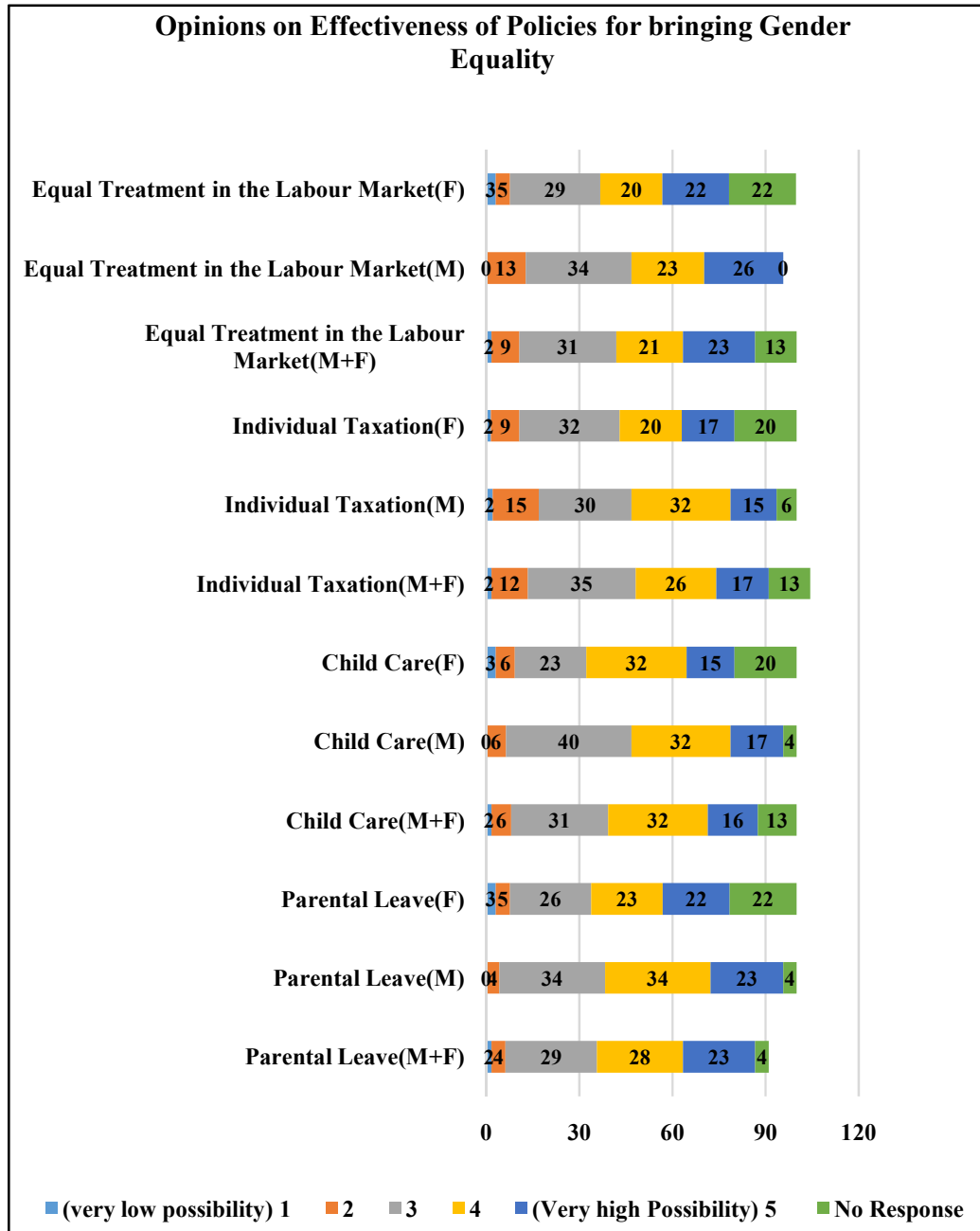
Majority of respondents in this regard were found to be in favour of adoption of Swedish Gender Equality Policy at the European level. Most of the responses range from ‘fair to very high possibility’ indicating the moderate nature of emulating Swedish Gender Equality Policy at the EU level. Around 39% of the total respondents show high possibility of emulating Swedish gender equality policy and agree that it has a fair chance of being emulated effectively. However, 8% of the respondents chose to disagree on its high possibility and mark it less than score 3.

The reason for medium level responses for the degree of possibility for adopting Swedish gender equality policy model at the European Level can be explained from the fact that, European Union has no authority over individual national family policies. Hence, in spite of a successful gender equality policy of Sweden, EU cannot enforce it at the wider European Level. Moreover, because of distinct socio-cultural set up of each European country, adopting Swedish Gender Equality Policy as a pan European Model is most unlikely to happen. However,

having said that, many European countries have already started adopting some good practices or strategies of Swedish gender equality policy. For instance, decriminalisation of prostitution and criminalising the client in forcing for sexual services is one such legal measure now adopted at the EU level (this was an innovation of Sweden and countries like Germany, Spain, Norway, Finland, and many other Western and East European countries are showing positive gesture towards such initiatives). It may be expected that in the long run most of the European countries will be able to take up some other good practices of Swedish model in order to bring gender equality in their own societies.

In accordance with the previous query, an effort was made to locate those specific measures in Sweden which could be adopted to a large extent by the European counterparts. To this end, some of the policy initiatives like Parental Leave, Public Child Care, Individual Taxation and Equal Treatment in the labour market are being put to test on the basis of their effectiveness in bringing gender equality. The respondents were asked to mark the best possible policy initiatives among the options that could mitigate gender inequality to a greater extent. The opinions are given in the following Figure 5.12.

Figure: 5.12 Opinions on Effectiveness of Policies for bringing Gender Equality (in Percent).



As can be seen from Fig.5.12, majority of respondents consider all the policy initiatives as significant steps to eliminate gender disparity and have equivocally show their agreement in its emulation by other countries in Europe. The result shows

greater response (80%) towards 'Equal Treatment in the Labour Market' and 'Individual Taxation' followed by initiatives of 'Parental Leave' and 'Public Child Care'. With respect to the opinion shared by male and female respondents, male respondents show more inclination towards parental leave system, equal treatment in the labour market and public child care as more convenient step in mitigating gender inequality as compare to their female counterparts. However, an average of around 11% respondents did not give any response regarding the matter.

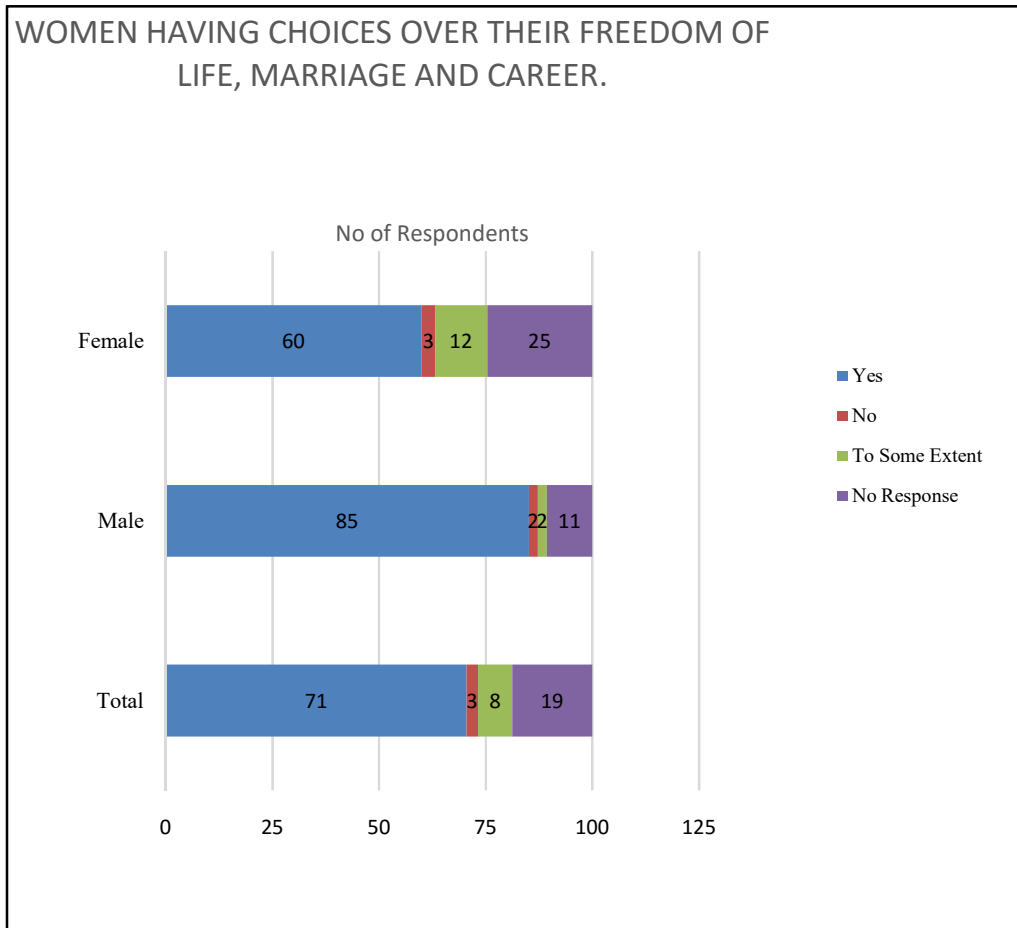
Aforesaid analyses may be considered as a reflection of the opinions of general people and can provide a positive indication towards these policy initiatives. The result also reflects the mindset of general people who finds solutions for gender equality in de-constructing the gender system—which validates conforming to socially constructed gender roles—by redistribution of resources, rights and responsibilities between men and women. To this end, involving men into traditionally assigned gender roles and ensuring economic independence for women in society is considered essential. Such solutions are not women centric yet it involves larger framework of arresting the interests of both men and women that further lead to transforming or changing the mindset against rooted gender bias.

Besides exploring various issues and aspects of gender equality policy in Sweden, an attempt was made to understand the status of women in Sweden and to know whether they enjoy equal freedom and choices over important aspects of their life such as marriage and careers (Fig 5.13). 71% of the total respondents agreed that women to a certain extent do take decision for various choices in life particularly in marriage and choosing career options.

However, 19% of the respondents skipped this question in which majority are female respondents. With respect to male and female respondents, 85% of male believe that women do enjoy rights over these issues, however, only 60% female respondents agreed to it. Only 12% of female respondents agree that women in Swedish society enjoy these rights to some extent, whereas the corresponding response male respondents in this case were only 2%. There are 3% of all respondents who outrightly rejected women having any such rights. Based on the result it can be argued that although most men perceive that women in Swedish society is relatively better placed in terms of taking decisions over their marriage and career, but in reality women differ on the same. Therefore, although gender mainstreaming in Sweden

seems to be working effectively and has helped women to overcome their social, political and economic constraints, there is still space for further improvement.

Figure: 5.13 Women’s Choices Over Their Life, Marriage and Career (in percent).



In accordance with various issues and prospects of Swedish gender equality policy; a query was finally made to trace the existing barriers in Sweden with respect to achieving gender equality. Knowing the barriers can be useful for the policy makers in identifying those areas where gender mainstreaming strategy can be initiated. The responses were accordingly classified in following manner in the table 5.1

Table: 5.1 Barriers in the Process of Gender Equality in Sweden

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>Social</b>	(i) Women take too much responsibility in the home. (ii) There are notions about how male and female should behave accordingly to old opinions about gender.
<b>Political</b>	(iii) Media portrayal of stereotypes
<b>Economic</b>	(iv) Unequal pay/wages in the labour market. (v) Conservative attitudes and thinking in organisation
<b>Cultural</b>	(vi) Gender bias, old fashioned values and preconceived expectations among people (vii) Behavior at public space like clubs (stereotyping) (viii) Rape culture (ix) Prevailing Masculine ideals (x) Lack of information/knowledge about gender structures: the benefits of gender equality for the whole society. (xi) Lack of knowledge in gender and class structure (xii) The persistence stereotyping of girls and boys and how one should behave. (xiii) The mindset of people.

The overall response reflects on various existing barriers in Swedish society which for most of the respondents, come in way to accomplish the process of gender equality. The overall responses can be categorised as social, political, economic and cultural barriers to which each response may resonate to one or other social, political, economic and cultural factors. At socio-cultural level, factors like gender bias, lack of knowledge in gender and class structure, persisting norms on gender role behaviour, masculine hegemony, and maintaining traditional role for women in caring and household tasks etc. act as barriers to gender equality. Some respondents emphasised

on stereotyping women and their behaviour across domain including media portrayal of women, sexualising women in public spaces, prevailing conservative thinking and approach in various organisation play hindrance in the way to mitigate gender inequality. Also at economic level, unequal wages and distribution of resources between men and women in the labour market contributes to the problem. Above all, the existing value system and mindset of people to some extent influence in reinforcing the gender structure in Swedish society and hence become a barrier in the way of bringing fair gender equality.

**5.2 PART-B Analysis of Interview:** The survey was conducted with a random sample consisting of students and research scholars, the research study used interview technique as well for gathering substantial information on gender mainstreaming in Sweden. A set of 20 respondents was interviewed who work extensively with/on gender issues. The interviewees primarily belong to academic research, civil society and policy making in the EU and in Sweden. The interviewees at the EU were closely associated with European Parliament; DG Justice; DG Employment, and the European Union Lobby (EWL). The interviewees from Sweden were mostly academic scholars and experts on gender related issues and have made profound contributions to gender equality discourse in Sweden. In order to reach out to the interviewees some key officials and persons were contacted initially who helped further in reaching out to the likely interviewees. The Interviews were conducted over a period of three months in 2014. Each interview lasted for about one hour and transcription of the interview was taken in verbatim. The transcription of the interviews becomes first step in the interpretation and analysis of the data.

The interviews were semi-structured in nature involving questions pertaining to the understanding of gender in diverse policy texts and initiatives in the EU and in Sweden. This helps in exploring how gender equality is being perceived and used in gender equality policy and is manifested through various social and economic policies. Moreover, the purpose was to know how gender mainstreaming is being perceived at various levels alongside assessments of its relations with social and economic policies, decision making and experience with opportunities and challenges to bring gender equality and to what extent the experience of Swedish gender mainstreaming can be shared at the European Union. As the interviews were semi-

structured, it allowed open ended questions and respective answers from the respondents.

Interviewing those people was very captivating and insightful experience. Although initially the ideas were scattered as to what really should be asked and how to utilize these interviews, but things started to get streamlined with each interactions with the experts. However, it was not much easy to get hold of the extremely busy EU officials, Swedish academic scholars and other experts but the persuasion made it all possible and rewarding.

In order to have an in-depth understanding, the interviewees in the EU and Sweden were asked to discuss their work and experience about the projects they are occupied with: Some of the interviewees narrated their experiences at the EU about how the EU deals with issues of gender equality and its various aspects in its policy making process. Queries were specifically put forth relating to the definition of gender, gender (in) equality, and gender mainstreaming. The responses of the interviews helped in two ways: in knowing about their degree of involvement with the policy making process and also about how the policy implementation of gender equality measures or various other initiatives depend on how these policy makers define or understand 'gender inequality' as problem area in the policy discourse. Alongside the general definition of gender related issues and aspects, some interviewees shared a historical overview of gender mainstreaming strategy and how it has been incorporated in the EU policy initiatives.

As the study focuses on Sweden, these interviews reflect a way of thinking that resonates with a distinct socio-political culture of Sweden. Besides, gathering information about the EU policy discourse on gender equality, these interviews provided an in-depth and primary narrative of the following aspects on Sweden: to know (i) how the Swedish policy discourse perceives gender equality and gender mainstreaming and is manifested accordingly through its policy instruments (ii) what are the factors that led to development of a unique gender mainstreaming process in Sweden (iii) to what extent various policy instruments like parental leave system, public child care, or individual taxation system have impacted the gender relations in Swedish society (iv) what is the degree of possibility to emulate Swedish model of gender equality at the European union level.



However, considering the limited space of this research, the briefing of these interviews could not contain the entire version of the interviewees. However, an effort was taken to sum up some of the essential arguments that emerged during the conversation process.

(i) Defining ‘Gender Equality’, ‘Gender mainstreaming’ in the EU and Sweden:

When it comes to defining or theorizing ‘gender equality’ within the context of EU policy discourse, most of interviewees considers that the EU lacks a definite explanation of the concept of how it should be perceived. Most of the interviewees hold that gender at the EU level is defined as a fixed category to which a value is assigned: i.e. either ‘male’ or ‘female’. Some of the interviewees spelled out that the problem of gender (in) equality at the EU level is accrued to the unequal opportunities and outcome in the labour market and has received less reference on the socio-cultural reproduction of gender at home. Spelling this out one of the interviewee says: “For me, the problem lies in understanding gender [...] gender is understood as a fixed category and not as a process. Gender is often resembled as women only in the policy discourse of the EU. Therefore, gender inequality is problematised as a cause for women’s lack of participation in the economic growth only. Hence, economic independence becomes the only solution for achieving equality”. According to another interviewee, gender equality in the EU is mostly ensured through legal mechanisms. The interviewee says that “although gender equality is highly prioritized in the EU, but it is problematic in the sense that it accrues a legal aspect to it. Gender equality is a matter looked after by the DG Justice of the EU. It protects individual rights but it does not necessarily do something to make society to become more just. So the people who feel discriminated generally come and complaint and they get justice in terms of their right. This makes the process passive in attaining gender equality in wider sense.” The legal aspect of gender equality therefore to an extent, undermines the wider conceptualisation and practice of gender mainstreaming process at the EU. As gender mainstreaming as a strategy seeks to bring transformation at the structural level, categorizing gender as a fixed category makes it less productive.

For most of the respondents the gender equality policy in the EU is being widely dealt with issues of trafficking, poverty, ethnic equality, employment of men and women etc. and therefore frames the policies accordingly to have an impact upon not only

men and women but also on different groups in the European societies. There is almost no policy at the EU level that is directed to address the unequal gender relation within family that reproduces gender inequality in the labour market. They hold that gender equality policy at the EU level is directed towards work-family balancing policy that seeks to create a conducive situation for women to balance both their caring and household responsibility. It does not seek to bring substantive equality between men and women. Reiterating this one of the interviewee says that such solutions often fail to address the relative inequality between men and women as it arises from the way policy discourse have defined the problem of gender inequality. She says, "Usually 'Gender' or 'gender equality' is defined in different ways in various policy discourse and so the proposed solutions to bring gender equality also differ. Adding to this she says, those who are in charge of formulating and implementing these solutions also differ. One of the interviewee spelled out that "gender is not only about whether one is female or male. Gender per se is a social practice; something that is continuously constructed in practice. So it's not like a theory; it's not a box you click; gender is a process and implies negotiations and power struggles. If policy makers do not understand that, it's difficult for them to include gender in all the policies".

What the EU presently struggling to deal with is its structural inequality and hence the objective of gender mainstreaming in transforming gender relations take a back seat in the EU policy discourse. Referring to this one interviewee spelled out "I don't think that gender mainstreaming is really working in that sense, what has been happening is that the policy of affirmative action is given priority over gender mainstreaming because they are easy to formulate but sometimes these kinds of policies are biased as they focus on women only". That the dual track approach of the EU which contains positive action and gender mainstreaming though has tried to address the existing gender inequality, it weakens the transformative ideology of gender mainstreaming.

Most interviewees maintain that gender mainstreaming is still a developing concept and therefore do not share a homogenous view regarding its definition. They hold that there has been a substantial change in the meaning of how gender mainstreaming was initially adopted by the EU policy makers. Tracing its origin, one of the interviewee says "historically there are three approaches at the EU level starting with equal

opportunity to positive action and gender mainstreaming, something that started during 1990s. However, in the meanwhile lot of development took place around the meaning and implication of this strategy". Adding to this an interviewee says, "at the end of the last century and the beginning of this century people at the EU level started to talk about doing gender in a different way and they came up with this road map [...] however, it shifted from having a quite concrete goal to something that is much more vague, this is what we are doing with gender mainstreaming". Supporting this interviewee echoes, "there are ongoing discussion going around concepts and issues related to gender mainstreaming strategy and also about understanding of gender mainstreaming as value based concept". The understanding also becomes problematic as the policy makers and academic researchers hold different opinions about gender mainstreaming. Reiterating this, one interviewee says, "there is no one general view among researchers and policy makers because there is a constant debate going on about gender mainstreaming whether "its a good strategy", "does it work", "what are the effects", "what is the difference between gender mainstreaming and the previous policy or strategies-so there is not one common understanding" Referring to such multiple views, one interviewee attempted to define gender mainstreaming in a simple way saying, "Gender mainstreaming is to change society and in order to bring that change, there is need to develop tools, methods, and strategies by the administrative people in the organization". With a little more clarity, another interviewee spells out that, "at the EU level, gender mainstreaming refers to structures and relations [...] gender mainstreaming is supposed to be a step forward from the previous policy approaches such as equal opportunity and positive action where the inequality approach used to be solely women issue. So in the policy of affirmative action one was supposed to deal with women issues. Whereas on the other hand, in gender mainstreaming one is supposed to deal with gender relations-i.e. between men and women-it's a revolutionary method as it assumes that inequality lies in structures, system and unequal power relations".

With respect to Sweden, most of the interviewees maintain that, Swedish definition of Gender mainstreaming does not differ from European definition; however, they say that it differs with respect to holding its values and principles. Echoing this one of the interviewee says, "although there is a similar definition of gender mainstreaming both at the level of EU and in Sweden, but in Sweden you talk about not mainstreaming

gender but the Swedish concept is mainstreaming gender equality [...] I would say that the concept of gender mainstreaming in Sweden is used as a strategy as well as a method at the policy level...”. However, “it does not matter if you take it as the strategy or a method, but what matters is that gender and gender equality perspective should be mainstreamed in the practices in the everyday work that you do [...] and that’s what gender mainstreaming does here”.

Tracing the history of gender mainstreaming in Sweden, one of the interviewee holds that “initially the proposal for defining gender mainstreaming was little difficult as there was no Swedish word for it. The idea behind the word was however accepted in its spirit as part of its political commitment. Municipalities were given the responsibility in order to initiate a change in society. That was how Sweden put gender mainstreaming into work. In the beginning it was not very successful though, but eventually it became very successful. In the course of time Sweden developed a tool called ‘three R-model’<sup>252</sup>, which got applied in all the municipalities and which yielded remarkable success”. Gradually, “even private companies are working with gender mainstreaming so there are lot of gender mainstreaming going on. Additionally, there is this gender mainstreaming from the government which is called gender mainstreaming programme. It works through 10-15 government agencies. So they all are working for gender mainstreaming in their own way that would work”, another interviewee added.

While there were varied understanding regarding definitions of gender mainstreaming, most of the interviewees agreed over the fact that there are number of problems that still exists with respect to gender mainstreaming strategy and its implementation process at the ground level. One interviewee spells out that, “although the ideology behind the word is already accepted at the political level seeking to bring change in the wider society, it has been very difficult to implement it

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<sup>252</sup>This three-R stands for *Representation*, *Resources* and *Realia* respectively. The 3R method involves surveying and analysing an activity in terms of gender equality, It is usually a norm that governs any policy instrument or activity in terms of gender equality, on the basis of *Representation* (to see if gender distribution at every level of the activity or decision making process is maintained), *Resources*(to see how the resources in the activity, in the form of time, money and space distributed between men and women)and *Realia* (to understand how did representation and resource distribution between the sexes come to be as they are? The purpose of the *Realia* is to address the question of what it all really involves, and to demonstrate what may be considered self-evident in this activity: the gender-related norms and notions that shape it). It also looks into the division of power between men and women, and the ways gender relations are addressed in any organisational activity. nature and organisation of the activity.

in reality. Some interviewees consider that most of its problem related to implementation arises due to financial irregularity for ongoing projects or bureaucratic dilemma over conceptualising the concept' or apathy of general people towards gender mainstreaming. One interviewee says, "we had lot of projects underway regarding gender equality but as soon as money gets stopped, they don't continue the project", [...] "of course the intention was to change the culture so that men and women could have same opportunity and same share of responsibilities but it is very difficult to implement it sometime." Some interviewees also spelled out that "gender mainstreaming becomes a technocratic process and hence gets out of reach sometime from the common people in understanding its core values". Hence, "the major challenge for it is to involve citizens and save it from becoming another bureaucratic model [...] the challenge is to relate gender mainstreaming works with gender equality and further gender equality to the democracy society [...] and this is all inter linked. For example: the budget is very central to gender mainstreaming as it reflects the intention of the government. Through budget it can be analysed whether it contains a gender analysis over its spending across sectors. However, at the EU level, most of the money is going to rockets and energy plans, and very little is going into areas like household, health care or issues that requires attention to deal with gender inequality, to deal with women. May be the fundamental ambition of the EU is not to be gender neutral but to pursue masculine interest and a masculine version of society".

Drawing on the drawbacks in the implementation process, some of the interviewee reasoned out that lack of knowledge is also a significant barrier to carrying out the process of gender mainstreaming. They hold that while gender mainstreaming is an inclusive strategy that seeks to transform gender role relations across domains through deconstructing the socio-economic power structure that validates traditional gender roles and proposes to bring changes by engaging men in the gender equality framework—in the sharing responsibility in caring and household tasks —thus challenges the existing gender culture, but in many cases, bureaucratic people involved in the policy making are not likely to incorporate values of gender mainstreaming that way. One such argument was, "even after 20 years of Beijing declaration on gender equality, the EU has not been able to bring remarkable progress. There is still lack of gender sensitivity. Being a Chair of the Committee for

women's rights and gender equality in the EU, my committee very often serves opinions to other committees and proposes them for adding gender mainstreaming. Even the European Commission puts up proposals to get gender mainstreaming incorporated in its documents. However, it is not always implemented in practical terms [...] there are people who don't want to put the gender perspective because of lack of knowledge and understating of methodological tools on gender mainstreaming and this slows down the process”.

Referring to this bureaucratic dilemma, one interviewee puts up an example saying, “you will have people working with transportation policy and they are expected to include gender perspective in their policy while framing it. However, these people are specialised in transport issues only and usually do not undergo training on what gender means and even if they do, it is not successful and productive because their understanding of gender is a rigid understanding. They do not really try to analyze how every policy is going to affect women and men differently. Therefore gender mainstreaming is not working in that sense”. In a similar vein, another interviewee echoes, “gender mainstreaming cannot transform anything because it needs pressure from below. There are many people who claim that it has potential to make changes but as of now it seems to be stuck in different departments and bureaucracy, the administration in the EU does not have the will to do this kind of transformative policy.”

#### (ii) Unique features of Swedish society and progressive gender equality culture

An in-depth understanding of the inherent socio-cultural; political and economic factors was sought to be gathered through the narratives of the interviewees in order to understand the gradual progress of a distinct gender equality culture in Sweden. Almost all the interviewees agreed over the unique features of the Swedish society and its well developed gender equality policy which further provided a conducive environment for setting up gender mainstreaming as a normative principle in the policy making process. Citing out some of the features of Swedish society, one interviewee says, “Sweden has always been radical in terms of gender relations. With the advent of industrialisation and modernisation in the 19th century, and Sweden leaving its last traces of its rural past, underwent though an immense economic overhauled due to industrial restructuring, while also giving birth to unmarried

cohabitation that became common among Swedes living in the new agglomerations that grew rapidly as part of industrialisation. Between 1966 and 1972 the marriage rate in Sweden dropped 40%, and at that time the future of the nuclear family was believed by some to be threatened. Unlike countries of the West, such relationship was not considered as deviant. Rather, the enormous drop in the marriage rate led to approve the nature of cohabitation. Most people preferred not to marry and set up consensual unions without the blessing of the church of the state simply because during these transitional times such conventional behaviour as marrying was not seen as necessary. In fact, the traditional Nordic values of partnership are still emphasised, perhaps even more so; there is an acceptance of sexuality in adolescence and outside marriage, but with an emphasis on companionship and fidelity for both spouses in marriage. And this is in several ways different from the mainstream discourse of the contemporary western industrialised culture. For instance Sweden made sex education in schools compulsory in the 1950s. According to legislation, schools are supposed to promote the right to individual's choices when it comes to sexual life styles and it should also promote equal right of men and women and gender equality. For 30 years adolescent clinics have supplied teenagers with contraceptives and prescriptions and female virginity was never an issue as compared to most Western countries", however, "these developments were however not unique to Sweden as they were not reforms but rather enactments of deep rooted cultural traits and therefore were accepted more easily and / or earlier than in other countries". The relative equality between the sexes which is found in Sweden as well as the positive attitude towards otherwise subjugated groups, such as adolescents and women, and also having sexual experience is by no means has been evolved as a result of moral superiority that Sweden holds, but all have been evolved as a result of an almost equally shared poverty in which women were seen as partners and companions rather than as threats to their male counterparts. The extremely low population density also made the fecundity of women more of a blessing than a threat. One of the interviewee spelled out, "we are deviants of the world. The world is not going to eventually catch up with us and be like us. We are not the norm...but this does not mean that lessons cannot be learned from our history." For some interviewee, such radical wave in Sweden was reinforced through the involvement of middle and upper class women during the feminist movements in Sweden.

The feminist influence was such that middle and upper class housewives/women demanded to get educated instead of merely confining to house. Eventually the housewives disappeared rapidly and there were shortages of labour which amounted to import of labour from Poland, Greece, Czechoslovakia etc. So if a woman wanted to study as librarian, or arts or whatever, she got some subsidies for it. I don't know any country where the housewives disappeared so rapidly as here. Hence, for the interviewees, the combination of feminist movement and the liberal ideas along with the shortages of workers led to bring a more equal culture. Reiterating this, one interviewee says, "we had a system in the 1800 and 1900 in the heart of the world, where night courting, abortion were all allowed and religion never had any influence over state and individual affairs. This is due to the fact that sexualisation of women has not been much a usual phenomenon in Swedish society, therefore, regulations around women's sexuality was never an issue in Sweden. For example, children born out of wedlock are not considered illegitimate in Sweden and it has been abolished in 1970. Children were usually typified in four ways in the Swedish social system- (i) full-legitimate children (born to married couples); (ii) semi-legitimate children (born not to the married but engaged couple); (iii) the third category was semi illegitimate (in which father's name is not known); then (iv) real illegitimate (father's name unknown to mother). This happened in rarest cases. However, despite this, the Swedish gender system does not sexualise women character and call any women a whore. There are no illegitimate children in Sweden".

Reflecting upon its historical legacy on gender equality, one of the interviewees said that, "one can trace out the Swedish gender equality effort all the way to 19th and 20th century, in the Berlin conference 1970s. There was a debate between the Swedish women and the German women, and in which Swedish women favoured against maternity leave and maternity protection because for them it would create inequality in the labour market, whereas the German women spoke in favour of it as they wanted to access the facilities as mothers. The Swedish women always needed the equality perspective in the labour market; however, German had it more on motherhood". Reflecting upon this, another interviewee says, "I think the most important thing is that Sweden has been consequent about gender equality. Gender equality has been one of the main principles of the Swedish society and it has been followed in both social policies and economic policies in late 1960s when the labour



market was opened for women. The policies were designed in a way that it would be easier for women to participate in the labour market and combine it with family life. However, Sweden also has been consequent about men's participation in the family. For Sweden, gender equality is that everyone will do both caring and earning independently. Therefore, both men and women are expected to be in the paid work and they are expected to involve in taking care of their children too". The interviewee added, "there is a discourse specially among young people that even household work should be divided equally so there should not be such thing that women do the cooking just because she is woman but even the household tasks should be equally divided [...] men and women should be doing both-earning and caring-so that family life should be inclusive both for men and women". This becomes the most significant feature in Swedish gender equality policy as its focus on engaging men into transforming gender relations. This transformation is mostly visible the way men involve themselves into the traditionally assigned gender roles in the family. Referring to this one interviewee expresses, "the political debate in Sweden to incorporate the idea of involving men in gender equality framework started in 1960s and it was seen as a new kind of theoretical framework in the policy debate during that decade as it was sought to bring changes in the gender role relations in Swedish society". This has brought remarkable outcome with respect to undoing socially constructed gendered roles. The interviewees hold that, while introduction of parental leave and public childcare at the European labor market was done with an aim of facilitating conditions for women to balance work-family responsibilities and to increase their participation in to the labour market, the underlying idea of parental leave in Sweden was not only to shed off women's sole responsibility towards caring and household tasks, but also to now consider men as the agent of change.

The general perception started to change during 60s where men started participating in policy debates regarding gender issues and there were scholar, politicians who then thought that nothing could change the status of women if men were not also involved in this policy debate. Reiterating this one interviewee says, "Sweden has been pushing men to take over parental leave and care for children through parental leave regulations. It was among the first few countries to introduce gender equal parental leave system in 1974. The regulation added the provision of daddy month for making the leave compulsory for men." According to many respondents, things are changing

in Sweden and most of Swedish men now participate in sharing responsibility like household and caring tasks which in a way push women more to take up their paid work. Adding to this one interviewee emphasises that “Sweden can do away with it (Parental Leave) also simply after ensuring equal participation of both men and women in labour market. But, it didn’t and tried to look beyond labour market into family by bringing a lot of policies for bringing parity in sharing household work within family”. However, some of the interviewees differed on the way parental leave has its effect on gender relations. Considering the parental leave effect, one interviewee spelled out, “I would say on attitude level, almost 100% of Swedes, both men and women are positive about gender equality and they are very confident about paternity leaves, equal share of responsibility on their own, there are still differences when it comes to practicing the same in reality [...] some studies show that women still use 75% of the leave whereas men are using only 25% [...] there are still gap exists between the way people perceive gender role and in their practices”. Another interviewee expressed that, “while for working class the changing role of men is still a matter of debate; the white collar workers are more receptive about men’s new role in transforming gender relations within family and outside”.

In wording unique features in Sweden, some respondents also pointed out that, although there are still differences that exist between men and women in the labour market and also in the family, Sweden is doing better in terms of applying principles of equality. Sharing the experiences, one of the interviewee says, “while in many countries women face difficulties in reaching top positions and so they seek for quota system to get promoted to higher positions. But in Sweden, such quota system has been debated at length as Swedish feminist raised concern over the quota system saying that it leads to gender discrimination”. The interviewee further explains that, “unlike USA and Britain where women are being promoted to the positions through quota system, you don’t see them in Sweden because Sweden does not promote affirmative action for a particular group rather it strives to distribute resources and opportunities equally among all its citizens. This is an interesting aspect”.

Besides this, another unique feature of Swedish welfare system is its social security which unlike many European countries where the social security is tied up to one’s marital status, in Sweden, the social security or social insurance is based on one’s citizenship rights. Moreover, there is no widow pension in Sweden and that has been

abolished. One of the interviewee thus expressed, “so if you are married or living together, it does not depend on what you get in old-age-it depends only on what you had your income-this is the economic equality which Sweden is pushing for. There is no parental, marital or partnership dependence as far as social rights is concerned”. Another interviewee says that historically Sweden has been more advanced in trying to introduce gender perspective in policies”. Explaining the history of gender equality policy in Sweden, most of interviewees discussed how policies like separate taxation for women and men, maternity leave, parental leave and publicly funded child care were all introduced in order to bring parity between men and women at social and economic level. Adding to the list of distinct features in Swedish society, an interviewee spells out that the presence of transparency in the public data system also adds to this list of distinct feature of Swedish society. As all the public jobs and opportunities are made public along with personal income of employed people, it creates a lot of transparency in the system which provides a conducive ground for both gender to be treated fairly unlike other countries. Such kind of transparency adds a lot to the gender equality. In lot of countries this transparency is missing. This transparency gives women a lot of push. However, some of the interviewees also hold a different view to gender equality in Sweden. For them, Sweden is not as much gender equal as it seems. In one of the narratives of interviewees it says, “My grandmother got university education but she did not get independent by that. She got knowledge, she got lot of interests for books when I was a teenager, I was reading philosophy and personally discussed with my grandmother. It was huge privilege to me that she had a university education and we usually kept my mother out of our intellectual discussion. With my grandmother I formed an alliance on intellectual ground and I profited enormously from it. But still she was not independent at all. She actually took care of her husband and daughter”.

#### (iv) Emulating Swedish model of gender mainstreaming

Having discussed at length, the vital aspects of gender equality policy and also of gender mainstreaming in Sweden, this research study, through the narratives of interviewees further sought to explore whether there is a wider acceptance of Swedish implementation of gender mainstreaming strategy. Most of the interviewees show disagreement over the fact that Sweden model of gender mainstreaming can be practiced and emulated at the European level. They hold that although in some areas

Swedish gender mainstreaming policy does get emulated at the EU level, but there is less feasibility of picking up such policy and implement it in another country because it simply might not work. One of the interviewee spells out, “one needs to apply an intersectional approach in order to analyses what kind of gender inequality problem exists in one region or organisation or municipality as putting a strait jacket to all may not serve the purpose. For example, if one is talking about Stockholm, the question arises that should we have gender mainstreaming policy for the whole of Stockholm area. We have specific gender inequality problems in Stockholm, if one moves towards northern part of Sweden the problems and situations look different”.

Adding to this one interviewee who is working at the secretariat of the European Commission says that “Since the EU is a body of 28 member states, therefore any decision gets through long dialogue and compromises before getting accomplished. Sweden people are quite ahead of gender mainstreaming procedure, but EU could not automatically take that experience and expertise and apply it over some other member state. There are some member states who are reluctant to implement gender mainstreaming even after the EU directives given, however, in such cases EU does not have any fixed measure or instrument to push them to accept the Swedish model into their own country because these countries are intrinsically different nations and completely different from Sweden; the mood is different; the mindset of people different etc”.

Another interviewee spelling her skepticism around the possibility of emulation says, “its so difficult to pick a set of policy instruments and transport them to different societies, different contexts, different histories and different politics [...] it’s not that it can’t be emulated, it’s the fact that a set of strategies and policies that is to be implemented in another society may not work because every society has a specific contexts and institutional set up, and distinct national politics. Sweden has a long history of equality politics supported by a large political base which is usually absent in many other European societies. Unlike other societies that are still struggling with culture and traditions and follow traditional gender roles for men and women, Swedish social, political and institutional bases show great transformation towards gender equality. However, such a transformative approach and politics are very hard to find in all European countries in Europe.”

Some of the interviewees were however, optimistic about sharing Swedish experience and expressed that the EU have already been following Swedish way of initiatives at many levels. One such view shows, “there are various examples where the EU had taken lessons from Sweden. One of the most important gender equality reforms that Sweden implemented during 1970s was introduction of pre school system. It was all acceptable by the EU and the argument put forth in favour of it was that it would provide opportunities for women to go out to labour market, get economically independent and so on”. Another interviewee spells out that, “the European parliament adopted a report on ‘Revolution among Swedish way to combat trafficking and prostitution’. Ten years ago it would not have been possible to adapt that report, but with very clear majority the EU parliament adopted this report as it finds that it is one of the most effective ways to deal with trafficking and prostitution. In Sweden, prostitution is decriminalised<sup>253</sup> but the buyer of sex is criminalised. In a society where women are predominantly marked as ‘objects of gratification’— this initiative becomes a symbolic step to convey the message that the notion of men having access to women’s body or buying a women’s body is not accepted legally in Europe”.

Talking in favour of application of Swedish gender mainstreaming at the EU level, one interviewee holds that “there should be wider acceptability of Swedish practices across the European Union, as the idea of gender mainstreaming itself at the EU came from gender experts from Sweden and Finland”. After having discussed all these aspects mentioned above, expressed their concern that, there is a need to have a strong welfare system as it liberates women in every aspect. Women are more dependent on welfare system. So the availability of public child care system and parental leave in promoting more of women’s freedom of choices towards life and career is an important aspect to the welfare system and Sweden has been able to incorporate such practices in its socio-political system. However, one of the most important gaps that the interviewees pointed out is that some of the European countries lack in advancing that welfare system. Therefore, other European countries can learn good experience from Sweden.

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<sup>253</sup> Sweden criminalises the person who buys women’s body but it does not criminalise women for prostitution. The EU has adopted it as its own point of view though it not legally binding for the EU.

The research presented an analysis of policy discourses of gender (in)equality contained in policy texts and documents at the level of the EU and Sweden. It sheds a critical light on how ‘gender (in) equality’ is talked about in the policy documents and policy practice at the EU as well as in Sweden in the context of gender mainstreaming and contribute to an understanding of how this representation of gender (in) equality as a ‘problem area’ results into respective proposed solutions at the level of the EU and Sweden. Following the theoretical debates and discussions alongside the empirical findings pertaining to gender equality, welfare state policies and gender-mainstreaming the research explored that, there is some agreement on the fact that gender mainstreaming at the EU level has not been able to fulfill much of its promises of being a transformative strategy, whereas in case of Sweden, gender equality policy led to a successful implementation of gender mainstreaming and yielded remarkable outcome. A summary of research is presented below.

To begin with, the present research started with the theoretical understanding of concepts related to gender, gender equality and gender mainstreaming, thereby presenting the standpoint for analysing the policy materials. As discussed in Chapter 1, the study understands gender as a social structure, process and practice. Gender as a concept is understood as a cross cutting socio-cultural variable and is not a fixed category. The traditional gender roles that are expected and valued as universal social norms, which are imbibed and reinforced through socialisation process are not fixed but changeable. Such gender roles are however, get established and institutionalised through various social, political, economic institutions as well as through legislation, culture, traditions etc. To this end, the research follows R.W.Connell, and Barbara J. Risman for better understanding. Connell views gender as a process which is ‘practice based’ (Connell 1987: 61), and needs to be framed sociologically. She considers that gender relations are a social question (*ibid.*). For her, it is the ‘structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes’ (2009, p. 11).

Risman explains gender as social structure that is ‘deeply embedded in society’ (ibid. 432). For her gender structure is being reproduced and converge through the three dimensions of the individual, interactional and institutional processes (ibid.: 433) and within all these dimensions there are causal mechanisms which help in producing gender. The present research made useful of these perspectives situating gender mainstreaming in the context of Sweden. This research perceived gender in terms of social categories, created and informed with social structures and norms and hence can be altered by public policies. Having explored various dimensions of gender and its related aspects, the initial chapter brings forth various intersecting issues related to gender equality like welfare state and social policy; the debate on paid and unpaid work; the politics of care work and social policy etc. All these issues are put forth in the European context so as to build a comprehensive understanding of the research study. Most significantly, the first chapter introduces the ‘gender mainstreaming’ as a concept and its relevance for this study.

Having conceptualized the theoretical and situational background of the research, following Chapters (2 and 3) take the study at the policy level, elaborating how gender’ as a problem area is a determinant factor in formulating respective policy instruments. Bacchi’s analysis of discourse analysis is therefore taken as a point of references. The focus in both chapters revolve around how ‘gender (in) equality’ as a ‘problem’ is defined in respective policy discourses in the EU and in Sweden, which in turn forms the formulation of respective policy solutions for gender inequality at both level. The research finds that in the EU, gender (in) equality as a problem is rooted in women’s lack of participation in the labour market and is therefore the policy proposals find solution in integrating women in to the labour market. However, such solution seems not to deal much with addressing unequal gender relations within family created due to compliance with traditional gender roles; unequal distribution of resources and responsibilities specially in matters of care work and household responsibility. The policies at the EU level therefore to a great extent escape the transformative aspects of gender mainstreaming (transforming gender relations at the structural level). In case of Sweden, the research finds that the problem of ‘gender (in) equality is defined in terms of unequal shared resources and therefore the gender equality policies together with welfare commitments are directed to incorporate gender perspective into all its policy areas. The reason for a different outcome of

gender mainstreaming in Sweden there rooted in the way a strong gender perspective is constructed in the policy discourse which in a way set the ground for achieving promise of gender mainstreaming objectives. However, at the EU level, incorporating gender equality has been more of a need than an intention-an intension to deal with the imminent economic and labour market crisis along with demographic deficit etc.

Having analysed the representation of gender inequality in policy texts and the respective policy approaches both at the level of the EU and in Sweden, Chapter 3, focuses on the detailed analysis of social and economic policies in Sweden and explores how the perspective of gender equality is being incorporated into these policies. This exercise contributed to the understanding of the rationale behind successful implementation of gender mainstreaming in Sweden. The research holds that for gender mainstreaming to work properly, gendered roles should not be seen as essential characteristics to a fixed gender trait, rather it should be seen as socially processed practices which entails relations of power and conflict and therefore can be altered through policy instruments. To this end the study analyses various policy instruments and initiatives like parental leave, individual taxation system, public child care, policy on women entrepreneurship etc. in Sweden and have explored that these policy initiatives have largely addressed interests of both men and women and also have been directed to redistribute the resources and responsibility within family in order to reduce existing gender inequality. The research also finds that these policy initiatives have substantial impact on overall gender relations in Sweden and have enriched the culture of gender equality in Swedish society.

Following the analysis of radical gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming in Sweden, Chapter 4 puts up the rationale behind emulating Swedish gender equality model and its application of gender mainstreaming strategy as a means to realise the vision of human rights and social justice. To this end, the chapter therefore explores various inherent unique factors that led to the development of Swedish gender equality framework. The research finds that distinct climatic aspects along with socio-economic and political significance of women and lack of religious interference in social and political affairs accorded a viable environment for the development of Swedish gender equality approach. More so, the research identifies a strong presence



of rationality and self expression values in Swedish society as compared to other developed societies across world which further contributed to representing Sweden's image in the global arena as a gender just society. However, the research substantiates problems in emulating Swedish model at the European level considering the complex administrative set up in the EU and also the presence of diverse socio-cultural set up of different member states in the EU. The research finds that although Sweden has substantially contributed to EU affairs pertaining to its reports, strategies etc. and Swedish delineation of gender equality policy has been highly appreciated as a progressive model by the European Union, emulating and practicing it at the European level may not seem possible. Swedish model may go through lot of challenges because of national and supranational factors. However, the chapter substantiates that despite resistance and challenges Swedish model can be emulated at the EU level partially through a knowledge based tools, communication strategies and institutional environments, in other words through the 'soft' approach of the EU.

After a detailed analysis of various aspects of gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming in Sweden, Chapter 5 set the ground for the empirical findings of the research. The chapter identifies the ground reality as against the theoretical understanding of the research study. A great deal of qualitative and quantitative data, collected through the field study is provides the background of the findings. The findings of the research reflect a an exploration of diverse perspective and ideas about gender equality issues in Sweden. It is found that although gender mainstreaming as a political concept is not much familiar in Sweden (due to its nature of language), Swedish society shows largely positive attitude towards gender equality. People show a positive approach towards equal distribution of labour work in the family and in work place. Therefore the research finds that transforming gender role relations within family in terms of sharing household and care work by men are gradually accepted in Swedish society which is further leading to wider changes in social mindset of people. The social and economic policy instruments play a significant role in transforming such gender role relations.

### ***(I) Findings and Discussions***

The primary questions that this research sought to study are: (1) what is the nature of gender equality policy in Sweden? (2) What are the factors that led to developing and implementing strategy of gender mainstreaming in Sweden? (3) What are policies and initiatives through which gender equality is sought to achieve in Swedish society? and what is the impact of these initiatives in transforming gender relations in Sweden? (4) To what extent gender-mainstreaming as a strategy differs with respect to its approach and orientation at the level of the EU and Sweden? and what are the barriers and challenges that come in way and affect the process of gender-mainstreaming at the EU level? (5) To what extent Swedish experience of gender equality policy is possible to be emulated as a model at the EU level or across the European countries?

In order to answer these questions, the research study used a blended methodology of qualitative and quantitative methods containing secondary data from existing policy texts, documents and literature on gender issues in the EU and Sweden and primary data from a field visit conducted in two cities of Sweden (Uppsala and Stockholm) and Brussels. This helped the research in substantiating its research findings.

While dealing with the primary research question of the nature of gender equality in Sweden, the research finds that, the distinct nature of gender equality policy in Sweden which has two principal aims: “(i) to combat and transform systems that preserve the gender based distribution of power and resources in society and (ii) to ensure that women and men enjoy the same power, opportunities, rights and obligation in all areas of life” (the fact sheet of Swedish government’s gender equality policy is enclosed in the Appendix C). It also documented characteristics of Swedish gender equality policy : the foremost being the overarching principle that everyone irrespective of gender has the right to work and is financially independent to balance their career and family life and to live with freedom to have choices in life.

The research finding also show that Gender equality in Swedish society does not only imply to have equal distribution of resources, rights and responsibilities between men and women, but it is also about ensuring the qualitative aspects of life that deals with values for gender equality in terms of human rights, knowledge and experience of both men and women that are sought to be used in promotion of progress in all aspects of society. For example: “The principles of gender equality are increasingly

being incorporated into education from pre-school level onwards, with the aim of giving children the same opportunities in life, regardless of their gender, by using teaching methods that counteract traditional gender patterns and gender roles. Today, girls generally have better grades in Swedish schools than boys. Girls also perform better in national tests, and a greater proportion of girls' complete upper secondary education. Whereas a few decades ago, the university realm was dominated by men, today nearly two-thirds of all university degrees in Sweden are awarded to women. Equal numbers of women and men now take part in postgraduate and doctoral studies" (Sweden.se).<sup>254</sup> Overall, in Sweden, gender equality shares the common vision for social justice and human rights. This vision can be identified across all the Swedish policy documents.

In addition to documenting the nature of gender equality policy in Sweden, the research also finds out the prerequisite factors that led to the development and implementation of the strategy of gender mainstreaming in Sweden. "According to Council of Europe (1998), there are some preconditions that are required to be fulfilled in order to process an effective implementation of gender mainstreaming like: (i) existence of a specific gender equality policy with national goals; (ii) the political will of the government to implement gender mainstreaming; (iii) availability of sex-segregated statistics to analyse gender impact assessment; (iv) gender equality knowledge and training programs in the administration in which gender mainstreaming is to be implemented; (v) financial means and reallocation of existing resources."<sup>255</sup> Although the implementation process of gender mainstreaming is beyond the scope of this research, none the less the study finds that these prerequisite elements and factors are present in Sweden providing a conducive environment for successful development for an efficacious gender mainstreaming strategy. The research finds that there has been a presence of a strong gender equality policy in Sweden which promotes 'equality between women and men and their equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities as a matter of human rights and social justice'. In addition to this, there is a strong commitment at the political level about complying with the norms of gender equality policy. Various political parties along with elected representatives and their corresponding ministries share a common vision towards

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<sup>254</sup> Document Attached as Appendix C.

<sup>255</sup> For more information please see <http://www.unhcr.org/3c160b06a.pdf>

bringing greater gender equality and follow all the directives in a stricter manner. All the ministries and elected representative coordinate with each other to incorporate gender perspective into their policy areas. Gender equality division is particularly directed to ensure effective implementation of gender mainstreaming in various ministries of the Swedish government. Another factor that contributes to the effective implementation is the presence of gender training courses among the administrators so as to incorporate gender perspective into the policy making levels and Sweden is found to be having such tools to improve the understanding of the administration. One such example is SALAR that offers gender training courses to the civil servants at the local and regional level in Sweden. These trainings aim at mainstreaming gender into decision-making activities, municipalities, county councils and private companies. Overall, SALAR's programme has provided such training courses for 66.000 civil servants until 2013 (EIGE, 2013a).

Such trainings are also provided by the National Secretariat for Gender Research (NSGR) at the University of Gothenburg for administrative staff at the State level. Over the period from 2008-2010, more than 2000 staff members of the ministries took part in conferences, workshops, seminars or summer school on a voluntary basis (ibid.). In 2007, SEK 125 million (€ 13.3 million) were granted to SALAR to target efforts to develop Gender Mainstreaming in county councils and municipalities. Additional SEK 13 million (€ 1.3 million) were given to the NSGR to further develop Gender Mainstreaming methods in 2008 (Government of Sweden, 2009). Besides this, there is this method called the '3R- method' which is based on: "systematisation of Swedish experience of work on gender equality that helps in incorporating gender equality considerations into the work of local authorities (COE, 2004). The idea behind this method is a systematic review of men's and women's representation in different places and positions, of the distribution and of utilisation of resources and of the question why goods, services and situations are as they are (COE, 2004)".

The presence of active labour market policies as well as well defined social policies along with strong political commitment contributed largely in the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming. In Sweden, labour market policies are aligned with directives of gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming provisions that help to fulfill the 'institutionalised' commitment to full employment" (Sainsbury, 1996, p.32).For

example: In 2009, a written communication to the Swedish parliament stressed the importance to coordinate and develop gender equality measures targeting working life, business, education and social policy. The communication includes analyses and sets out policy aims and over 60 strategic measures. Among them are measures to combat violence in the labour market and issues concerning men and gender equality. A total of SEK 235 million was provided for these measures (Government of Sweden, 2009). In addition to these institutional arrangements, there is also a presence of sex segregated statistics system that makes it conducive for sustaining objective of gender mainstreaming. All these prerequisite factors therefore led to the implementation of gender mainstreaming more effectively. Besides, political commitments along with various initiatives promoted by governmental organisations further made it conducive for flourishing though with some loopholes.

While exploring the impact of these initiatives, the research found out that gender mainstreaming received much acceptance at the policy level in Sweden and therefore the proposed solutions incorporate the inherent values that gender mainstreaming stands for. The social and economic policies like parental leave, individual taxation system, public child care, along with various labour market initiatives like flexible working hours and encouraging women entrepreneurship do reflect strong elements of gender perceptive. The research finds that these policy initiatives have greatly impacted gender relations to a wider level in Swedish society. More so, gender mainstreaming strategy also has been used in Sweden on a larger scale and it has received positive outcome over the years.

By looking at various arguments, understandings and the way 'gender inequality' is represented as policy problem, the research has explored differentiation in the discourses of gender equality at the level of the EU and in Sweden. These discourses should be taken as analytical constructs rather than precise descriptions of the discourses at different level. While dealing with policy discourse at the EU level, the findings also illustrate another important finding that is how structural causes of gender inequality are not being taken into consideration in the EU policy documents while defining the problem, therefore although the policies are directed to bridge gender inequality, it mostly focuses around keeping the stereotypes and gender roles

intact. The other dimensions of gender structure are being missed out and gender as a practice is seen only partially at the EU level.

The study further holds that in order to understand the causes of gender inequality, the focus is needed to unveil the structural dimensions that create gender relations. What it requires is to focus on gender relationally rather than focusing only on women, which is just one side of the relations. This consideration for gender structure puts emphasis of women and men's equal sharing of family responsibilities as well as their equal rights over parental leave and care facilities. This finds a solution for increasing women's participation in paid work. The education for boys is also equally important in transforming gender relations. The causes of gender inequality should therefore be redefined as not only in women's lack of participation in labour market but also in lacking of caring fathers that reinforces and reproduces the problem of gender inequality. This subject position is being analysed through this research findings. Another substantial finding is that Gender equality is incorporated into Swedish policy discourse as value instrument and at times intertwined with other gender issues. In Sweden, the social and economic dimensions are major element in constructing the problem of gender (in) equality in its policy discourse. The problem of gender inequality is considered to be rooted in unequal sharing of power resources and decision-making in all spheres of life. Therefore, the solution being offered is to not merely considering women as useful resources for the economy but also involving men in the domestic sphere as part of solution. At the EU level, gender mainstreaming is being used more of as a technocratic strategy of the organisation with its technical methods and strategies which very often evades its value oriented aspect. The technocratic dimension of gender mainstreaming therefore leads to depoliticising the issue of inequality in gender relations, and thereby finding solution of gender inequality only in increasing numbers of women in paid work. However the solution does not address rooted gender structure that reproduces gender inequality within family and outside.

With respect to considering Sweden as a model to be applied in other European countries, the research through its empirical study finds out that people are quite positive about such possibilities. There is a great deal of learning lessons when it comes to reformation and new innovations. However, the research also finds that

scepticism prevails with respect to emulating Swedish experience. It has been spelled out that it would be difficult to pick a set of policy instruments and transport them to different societies, different contexts, different histories and different politics. It's not that it can't be emulated, but the point is that, a set of strategies and policies that are to be implemented in another society may not work because every society has specific contexts and institutional set up and a distinct national politics.

**(II) Hypothesis Testing:**

The analysis of the research study shows that gender mainstreaming has been widely considered as an institutional strategy to achieve gender equality at the EU level. However, in Sweden, gender mainstreaming acquires a value based approach directed to transform gender relations at all levels of society. The basic difference that we find between the EU and Sweden with respect to using gender mainstreaming is in their approaches. As one interviewees spelled out, what makes Sweden unique is that it does not do 'gender mainstreaming' only but what it does is 'mainstreaming gender equality' both at the state and local level. Therefore in analyzing the first *hypothesis*<sup>256</sup> the research finds that the Swedish welfare arrangements have remarkably influenced the country's gender equality policy. The welfare treatment to women and men in Sweden as compared to other European countries has been generous and is based on equal citizenship. The social democratic welfare set up also has extensively influence the country's labour market as well as family policies. The welfare system therefore brought substantial changes in the lives of men and women by providing them full employment as well as an equal representation for both men and women in the labour market. "Sweden's welfare system is extensive with high provisions of benefits, a well-developed leave facility, and good-quality and sufficient child care facilities" (EC, 2008). The welfare policies are based on an egalitarian belief and social rights are regarded as universal (Kantola, 2010). An efficacious gender mainstreaming was found to be rooted in Sweden's policy framework as well as availability of sufficient financial resources and the inherent socio-cultural set up.

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<sup>256</sup> (i) *The presence of progressive gender equality policy together with Swedish welfare commitments led to the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming in Sweden.*

In this research study, Sweden is explored as an extensive welfare system and a society which runs through an egalitarian belief of universal rights and equality which has been doing gender mainstreaming through various initiatives for over 20 years. What has been supportive in the process is the presence of dual earner model/dual career model, the presence of public child care system, individual taxation and parental leave system all of which together supported women on equal footsteps with men. This strategy is being implemented not only at the national level but also across communities and municipalities at the ground level. Therefore, the hypothesis can be verified on the basis that an effective implementation of gender mainstreaming is correlated with Swedish welfare state commitment. The underlying Swedish welfare set up and its commitments seem to have provided a conducive environment for a progressive gender equality policy and the subsequent implementation of gender mainstreaming strategy in Sweden.

In the exploration of the second hypothesis<sup>257</sup> the research holds Swedish gender equality may be emulated as a model in achieving gender equality across the European Union. This is validated on the ground that welfare state policies can influence its policy instruments to incorporate the perspective of gender mainstreaming and this substantially depends on how the welfare state defines the rights of its citizens particularly its gender relations. Also the implementation is based on the welfare system of a State as well as its corresponding political and legal establishment. The Swedish model of gender mainstreaming therefore can be emulated or adapted to a large extent yet with considerable distinct socio-cultural and political flexibility.

The research holds that the principle behind the strategy remains the same regardless of the welfare system of a country, and the national adoption will always be similar. However, the degree of implementation or the scope or depth of the strategy's incorporation into various national policies may vary because of their distinct socio-cultural and political features. Apparently, research shows, Gender-mainstreaming seems to be more effective in countries with a social, highly beneficial welfare system

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<sup>257</sup> (ii) *Second hypothesis is: The success of the strategy of gender-mainstreaming in Sweden is being emulated at EU level*



that is based on the belief of an egalitarian society. Still, if resources and political will exist, the implementation in other types of welfare states can also be fruitful. One speciality about the Swedish welfare state is that its arrangements increasingly incorporate policy measures aimed at including male partners to take greater part in the care of children (Shaver, 2013). And this practice has increasingly gained acceptance by other European countries as well with more or less similar number of leave arrangements. By integrating men into the gender equality process the country shows that gender equality requires the support of both men and women as it does concern both sexes and not only women. Having this in mind, the hypothesis can be verified as other EU countries with lower GEIs can learn from the Swedish approach to achieve greater gender equality in their own society.

### **(III) *Limitations***

There were some limitations while conducting this research. Limitations were experienced with respect to limited space reserved for this research, in the matters of language, and span of field study. Although a substantial amount of literature has been written on gender mainstreaming which is available in general and also in the context of the EU. However, most of the literature pertaining to gender mainstreaming in Sweden has been written in Swedish language. Therefore, due to language incompatibility, much of the information in Swedish language have been overlooked and did not get incorporated. Particularly the information regarding practical implementation of the strategy at the ground level could have been given proper attention during the field study and in accommodating the research findings. The selection of sample during the survey became little problematic because some of respondents were comfortable with their native language wherein the questionnaire for the survey was written in English, hence some of the respondents show reluctance to answer those questions. Moreover, because of time constraint and short duration of field study, many local aspects were also overlooked.

#### *(IV) Relevance of Research*

Studying Gender mainstreaming can be a significant area of research in the coming years in the way to bridge the gap in gender (in) equality across the European countries as it is still a prevalent phenomenon across the EU. There is a constant need for using such strategies for bridging the existing gender gaps. Given a presence of all the prerequisites and situations like progressive gender equality framework, strong political commitment and financial resources, the practice of gender mainstreaming may yield maximum outcome for the rest of the European countries. The strategy of gender mainstreaming may not seem much effective in the short run, however, a long term impact can be expected once it is fully incorporated into national politics and into the social thinking: “Mainstreaming is a fundamental strategy-it may take some time before it is implemented, but it has potential for sustainable change”(Council of Europe, 2004, p.12).The research on gender mainstreaming has been quite broad and it opens up many avenues for further research in the field of gender and development and also their relation to policy framework. The future research therefore can bring more light on further aspects on gender mainstreaming in other areas of society like education, migration, the development, and health issues.

**To conclude**, it can be said that, since its inception a lot of changes and transformation has taken place in gender relations in Swedish society. Sweden has been using and implementing gender mainstreaming on a wider and deeper level and on a regular basis in order to achieve greater gender equality. Although there are considerable apprehensions about the adaptation of Swedish model by its European counterparts, none the less it can be helpful for countries to get good inspiration and practices for better societies. Things already started taking place. For example, France has recently emulated the Nordic model in which the French National Assembly recognised prostitution as a form of violence against women, voting to criminalize the purchase of sex in France. Under the new law, prostituted people will be decriminalised and men who are caught buying sex will be subject to fines.<sup>258</sup>

Shifting from women centric approach towards a gender based analysis and policy practice is what underlies the objective of gender mainstreaming. Understanding of

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<sup>258</sup> For more details please see <http://www.feministcurrent.com/2016/04/06/france-adopts-the-nordic-model/>

gender in terms of sex roles and the binary distinction between male and female have reduced the purpose of it. The research holds that gender structure is not always taken into consideration while framing policies at the EU level. Although the EU has been much vocal about gender equality and maintains its commitment for achieving gender equality across its domain, however, the policy claims and commitments seem to be more rhetorical in nature. In its relentless efforts to bring gender equality, the EU does not seem to be addressing and recognising gender structure in European societies which reproduces gender inequality within family and in the labour market. The solutions to bring gender equality is rather focused on ensuring economic independence for women and this does not look into how imbalanced gender relations within family may lead to inequality to a large extent. The solutions that the EU offers are supplementary to women's needs and interests. The need to engage men into gender equality framework and ensuring their involvement in sharing equal responsibility in caring and household responsibility is not taken much seriously at the EU level. Therefore, various policy formulations and practices in general understand gender as a fixed category and within the binary norm of male/female. Moreover, at the EU level, 'understandings of 'men and the norm'', still present in many policy documents; represent a complete backlash, holding back a real transformation of the gender structure. However, in case of Sweden, gender structure is sought to be deconstructed and redefined. Therefore the research holds that the solution towards bridging gender inequality may be laid down in a feminist scholarship that aims for transformation of the rooted gender structure by arresting all its aspects and dimensions as the way towards a more humane, just and equal society.

(V) Future Suggestions:

*Gender mainstreaming in bringing Gender Equality*

One of the prominent contributions of this research is that it deconstructs the notion of gender that usually resembles women. What this research holds is that gender as a concept needs to be re-defined clearly as a cross cutting socio-cultural variable. That gender systems are rooted in distinct socio-cultural context which subsequently become the determinant of how men and women are expected to follow or value certain socially accepted norms to validate their sexual identity should be therefore questioned. Furthermore, as the gender roles are socially constructed categories

reinforced through the process of socialization and get institutionalized as a standard norm can be altered with state policy/institutional mechanisms and economic incentives.

The research therefore gives a perspective to look beyond the prevailing gendered system to revisit the gender roles and its social relations. In the wake of ongoing transition of European societies with respect to economy, market and family, new expectations towards altering gender roles and behaviours are on rise so as to deal with situational crisis and challenges. New emerging gender framework not only demands to alter and deconstruct gender system and its hierarchical power relations between men and women, but also seeks to alter the political aspects of masculinity that validates male superiority over female one. The new gender discourse gives a new outlook to view 'men' as the agent of change in achieving genuine gender equality.

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## Appendix A: Questionnaire

GROUP-I

### SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Survey on Gender-Equality in Sweden (Through a set of Questionnaire)

- Sex:  Male  Female      Age: \_\_\_\_\_      Country of origin:
- Educational Qualification:  Graduate  Post-Graduate  Higher Studies  Others:
- Please mark your **Occupation**:  Part-Time  Full-Time/ Please mark your **Profession**:
- When you grew up, what parents did you mainly grow up with?:
  - Father
  - Mother
  - Step Father
  - Step Mother
  - Sibling
- Are you presently in a relationship?
  - No, single and have never been in a relationship.
  - No, single but have previously had at least one couple relationship.
  - Yes, have a couple relationship now but we do not live together.
  - Yes, have a couple relationship now and live together: Married/Co-habitation.
- Please indicate your monthly income:  Up to 14999 Krone  15000-29999 Krone  >30000 Krone

## Sharing Responsibility at Home

➤ How many hours per week do you spend in the following tasks?

❖ Cleaning

❖ Washing

Dishes

❖ Cooking

❖ Ironing

❖ Taking Pre-school children to Day Care Centres

➤ In the family that you grew up with or spent most of your life with, who had the main responsibility for the following tasks?

	Mother	Father	Other Members
Cleaning			
Washing Dishes			
Cooking			
Ironing			
Care work for children			

➤ According to you who spend most of the time with children among working professionals in Sweden?

Female

Male

➤ Do you think the Swedish gender policy has been successful in balancing work and family responsibility?

Yes

No, please comment

➤ Which of following aspect do you think can bring more gender equality?

Sharing care work and domestic responsibilities within family

Economic independence for women

Equal wage for equal work for men and women

Engaging men more into transforming gender role relations in society

Consider gender equality as value for human rights: individual conscience

Changing mindset through deconstructing gender role behavior- Gender-Mainstreaming

### Information about gender issues

- Are you aware of the concept of “Gender-Mainstreaming”?

Yes

No

- If yes, what is it according to you?

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- On as scale of 1-10 (1- Unequal, 10- Equal) how would you rate the following countries when it comes to the gender equality?

Countries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
France										
Spain										
Sweden										
Germany										

- Are you aware of the following terms? Please tell us more about it if you know?

Tax-deduction for household related services (2007)/Are you a direct beneficiary of it?

Gender equality bonus (2008)/Are you a direct beneficiary of it?

Collective agreements for gender equal pay.

- Do you think Sweden is a Gender equal society?

Yes

No

- On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 indicates very low possibility and 5 indicates very high possibility), to what extent do you think Swedish Gender Policies like Individual Taxation; Parental Leave; Child Care Policy could be applied successfully by other European countries.

Policies	1(Very low possibility)	1	3	4	5(Very high possibility)
Parental Leave					
Child Care					
Individual Taxation					
Equal Treatment in the Labour Market					

- On a scale of 1 to 5(where 1 indicates very low possibility and 5 indicates very high possibility), to what extent do you think Swedish Gender Policy can be emulated by the European Union?

1(Very low possibility)	2	3	4	5(Very high possibility)

- What are the most important existing barriers to gender equality in Swedish society?

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On a scale of 1 to 5(where 1 is highly rational and 5is conservative) how do you rate Sweden on the scale?

	1(Highly rational)	2(Modern)	3(Religious)	4(Secular)	5(Conservative)
Sweden					

- Do you think most Swedish women have choices over their freedom of life, marriage and career?

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**For Policymakers, Representatives of Government, Academicians, Scholars etc.**

This questionnaire is intended to collect data about designing and implementation of gender mainstreaming at policy level and also about conceptualizing all aspects of gender mainstreaming in Europe. Typically, the ideal respondent will be the Researchers, Policymakers, Lawyers, Representatives of Government, Academicians, Scholars. The questionnaire addressed to them would help in understanding core issues of gender policy issues in Sweden as well as in Europe.

In listing your views on gender-mainstreaming, please refer to the attached taxonomy and answer for those that are relevant to your area and present at your institution.

1. What do you understand by the term 'gender-mainstreaming'?
2. What are the major issues of concern regarding gender-mainstreaming in your opinion?
3. How effective is the EU gender policy in implementing equality measures across its policy areas?
4. Do you think gender-mainstreaming is different from other equality measures like economic opportunity or positive actions for women?
5. What are the contradictory elements in EU gender policy?
6. How effective gender mainstreaming has been in removing gender inequality?
7. What hurdles do you see in achieving the goals of gender mainstreaming?
8. How can we generate a gender friendly attitude in masses?
9. Who is largely responsible for gender inequality- Individual/society/ state?
10. What is the role of policy making in designing gender mainstreaming at strategy level?
11. What are the hurdles faced by the policy makers in implementing the gender mainstreaming in policy areas?
12. What should be done to make gender mainstreaming more effective?
13. What are the loopholes do you think gender mainstreaming usually underlie?
14. Do you think gender issues are of utmost importance at EU level/Sweden policy level?
15. What are the factors do you think may affect gender issues in Europe?
16. What are the areas where Europe confronts with gender inequality?
17. Why do you think gender mainstreaming is important?
18. What are the social and economic policies which have adopted gender mainstreaming as a strategy to address inequality? What has been the impact?
19. What are the specific programmes and initiative that your organizations/institute has taken up to address gender inequality?
20. Do you think gender inequality across EU member states is sensitive enough to deal at EU level? If yes how EU is dealing with it? And where EU faces problems?
21. What are the possible factors and actors that impact EU gender policy?
22. What is the general response towards gender mainstreaming in Europe/Sweden?
23. What is the current status of women in Europe/ Sweden?
24. Do you think Swedish model of gender mainstreaming can be emulated at EU level? What are the scopes and challenges?

## Appendix: B-- Images and Pictures from Various News Clips

### 1. In Sweden, Men Can Have It All ( Published on 02-24-2012);

In this land of Viking lore, men are at the heart of the gender-equality debate. The ponytailed center-right finance minister calls himself a feminist, ads for cleaning products rarely feature women as homemakers. For nearly four decades, governments of all political hues have legislated to give women equal rights at work — and men equal rights at home. Sweden had already gone further than many countries have now in relieving working mothers: Children had access to highly subsidized preschools from 12 months and grandparents were offered state-sponsored elderly care.



Source: <http://www.socialanxietysupport.com/forum/f32/in-sweden-men-can-have-it-all-167681/>

The parent on leave got almost a full salary for a year before returning to a guaranteed job, and both could work six-hour days until children entered school. Female employment rates and birth rates had surged to be among the highest in the developed world. “I always thought if we made it easier for women to work, families would eventually choose a more equal division of parental leave by themselves,” said Mr. Westerberg, 67. “But I gradually became convinced that

there wasn't all that much choice." Sweden, he said, faced a vicious circle. Women continued to take parental leave not just for tradition's sake but because their pay was often lower, thus perpetuating pay differences. Companies, meanwhile, made clear to men that staying home with baby was not compatible with a career. "Society is a mirror of the family," Mr. Westerberg said. "The only way to achieve equality in society is to achieve equality in the home. Getting fathers to share the parental leave is an essential part of that." Introducing "daddy leave" in 1995 had an immediate impact. No father was forced to stay home, but the family lost one month of subsidies if he did not. Soon more than eight in 10 men took leave. The addition of a second nontransferable father month in 2002 only marginally increased the number of men taking leave, but it more than doubled the amount of time they take. Clearly, state money proved an incentive — and a strong argument with reluctant bosses.

## **2. Will Sweden abolish the concept of gender? (Published on May 1, 2012),**

Sweden, it would seem, is doing its darnedest to abolish the idea of gender. Their latest effort comes with the introduction of a new gender-neutral pronoun, called "hen." But while some see it as a huge victory in the struggle to achieve gender equality, others see it as yet another imposition brought on by the political correctness police. There's no doubt that Sweden is a rock star when it comes to this sort of stuff. Two years ago the World Economic Forum designated Sweden as the most gender-equal country in the world. It boasts the highest proportion of working women in the world and allow for 480-day parental leaves — of which 60 days are reserved for dads. And in an effort to work towards yet even greater levels of gender equality, Sweden now wants to do it through the channel of linguistic gender-neutrality.

A good number of forward-looking Swedes have determined that government and society should no longer recognize any legal distinctions between the sexes. To that end, they have officially introduced the new gender-neutral pronoun, "hen," to the vernacular. To make it all the more official, they added it to the country's National Encyclopedia and defined it as a "proposed gender-neutral personal pronoun instead of he [han in Swedish] and she [hon]." Swedes figure that the introduction of a gender-



neutral pronoun will allow people to avoid having to identify themselves with a particular gender; it will also allow speakers to be sensitive to those people who choose to not have their gender identified. More conceptually, it can be seen as a refinement of the language, an added level of linguistic sophistication.



Source: <http://io9.gizmodo.com/5906663/will-sweden-abolish-the-concept-of-gender>

### 3. Night nurseries: Sweden's round-the-clock childcare (Published on Mar 19, 2013)

Just over 78% of mothers with children under seven went out to work in 2012, according to Statistics Sweden's latest Labour Force Survey. In Sweden, it is up to local government regions (known as municipalities) to decide whether they want to offer publicly funded out-of-hours care. It is currently available in 123 out of 290 areas and used by almost 5,000 children. Both single parents and couples are eligible to apply as long as their employer provides evidence of their shift patterns. Hospital workers, restaurant workers, transport workers and shop staff affected by longer opening hours in recent years, are among those who benefit from the service. From



Source: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21784716>

July, the governing centre-right Alliance has promised to spend \$17m (SEK 108.5m, £11m) over the next four years to help more areas improve their services. It says a lot about the nation's long-standing love affair with the welfare state that the main argument from opposition parties is whether that figure will prove to be enough. Sweden's minister for gender equality, Maria Arnholm says: "We believe it is important that families can combine parenthood with work and that shouldn't just include those who work nine-to-five but also those who work inconvenient hours," she argues. Public childcare guaranteed to all parents with most facilities open between 0630 and 1830, with fees capped at 3% of parental income, up to SEK 1260 (\$197, £132) a month for first child. Free pre-school for children between three and six, for up to 15 hours per week. All parents entitled to monthly benefit of SEK 1,050 (\$163, £109) per child with supplements for large families. Since 2008, about a third of municipalities have started offering a special allowance to parents who choose not to work while their children are under three. But this amounts to about eight per cent of an average monthly salary in Sweden and very few have taken up the benefit. But when you speak to mothers and fathers back in Sweden, most do appear fully sold on the country's public preschool model. "Thanks to affordable childcare, I was able to

study and retrain as a nurse," says Martina Stenbom, 44, a mother-of-one who lives in Stockholm. "It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor or in between like I am, the nurseries mean that everyone here has the chance to work," she says. "We do pay high taxes but we get something back and I think that's a great system. I am very happy to be a mother in Sweden and I wouldn't want to bring up my children anywhere else."

#### **4. Sweden: First a gender neutral pronoun, now a gender neutral toilet sign (Published on May 1, 2015,**

'Sigtuna Museum', just outside Stockholm, has introduced gender neutral toilet signs in its premises. The sign shows an image of the usual symbols – a woman with a skirt, a man in trousers and a disabled person in a wheelchair – outside the unisex toilets at the museum, as well as a gender neutral symbol of a figure wearing half a skirt, to include people who define themselves as LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender). "It's interesting to use this symbol especially at a museum with historical exhibitions like Sigtuna because it's important to understand that LGBT has existed in all times, it's not something that was invented in Los Angeles in the 1980s.

It would be interesting if the sign could perhaps make visitors think about questions such as 'what was it like to be gay in the Viking Age or transgender in the 1500s?'" said Pompe Hedengren, creative director of design studio Stockholm Graphics, who presented the concept to the museum. Earlier this year, the Swedish Academy decided to include 'hen', a pronoun with no gender in its dictionary, Svenska Akademiens ordlista, or SAOL. The word as presented in the Academy's dictionary will have two uses: *Source: Loowatch.com*





REGERINGSKANSLIET

Government Offices  
of Sweden

FACT SHEET

Ministry of Integration and  
Gender Equality

August 2009

## The Swedish Government's gender equality policy

The Swedish Government's gender equality policy has two principal aims: to combat and transform systems that preserve the gender-based distribution of power and resources in society, and to ensure that women and men enjoy the same power and opportunities to shape their own lives. When they share power and influence in all aspects of community life, the result is a more fair and democratic society. Gender equality also enhances economic growth by encouraging the development of people's skill and creativity.

### Policy aims and budget

The overall objective of Sweden's gender equality policy is to ensure that women and men have the same power to shape society and their own lives.

The policy forms is set out in four subgoals:

- Equal distribution of power and influence. Women and men shall have the same rights and opportunities to be active citizens and to shape the conditions for decision-making.
- Economic equality between the sexes. Women and men shall have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to education and paid work that provide them with the means to achieve lifelong economic independence.
- Equal distribution of unpaid care and household work. Women and men shall take the same responsibility for household work and have the same opportunities to give and receive care on equal terms.
- Men's violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys, shall have equal rights and opportunities in terms of physical integrity.

The Swedish Government has increased the resources available for gender equality policy measures. For the present term of office, 2007–2010, it has set aside SEK 400 million per year, which is more than ten times as high as the allocation for the previous term of office. As a result of this budget increase, gender equality policy can develop, become more vigorous and play a more active role. A gender equality perspective is to permeate all government policies. It is through action in such areas as education policy, employment policy and social policy that the means are created for achieving a society in which women and men are equal.

### Action plan for combating men's violence

In November 2007, the Government adopted an action plan (Govt. Comm. 2007/08:33) to combat men's violence against women, violence and oppression in the name of honour and violence in same-sex relations. Altogether, over SEK 300 million is being invested in 36 different measures up to the end of 2010.

The measures in the action plan are general in nature, but special steps are being taken to combat honour-related violence and oppression. The plan covers six areas of action, each of which is important in its own right but which also complement and reinforce one another.

These areas are:

- Greater protection and support to those exposed to violence
- Greater emphasis on preventive work
- Higher standards and greater efficiency in the judicial system
- Stronger measures targeting violent offenders
- Increased cooperation
- Improved knowledge

### Action plan to combat prostitution and human trafficking

In July 2008, the Government adopted an action plan (Govt. Comm. 2007/08:67) to combat prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes. A total of SEK 23 million is being invested in 36 measures up to the end of 2010.

The action plan focuses specifically on the exposed person's need of protection and support and states

that this aspect is to permeate government work at all levels. Special measures targeting children and young people are included. The plan covers six areas of action, each of which is important in its own right but which also complement and reinforce one another.

These areas are:

- Greater protection and support for those exposed to violence
- Greater emphasis on preventive work
- Higher standards and greater efficiency in the judicial system
- Increased national and international cooperation
- Improved knowledge

### Gender equality strategy in the labour market

During 2009, the Government has presented a strategy for gender equality in the labour market and in the business sector, in the form of a written communication to the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament). Based on a general, all-round perspective, the strategy seeks to coordinate and develop gender-equality measures targeting working life, business, education policy and social policy. The communication includes analyses and sets out policy aims and over 60 strategic measures. Among them are measures to combat violence in the labor market and issues concerning men and gender equality. A total of SEK 235 million are being invested.

### SEK 300 million to women's entrepreneurship

In May 2007, the Government adopted a three-year programme worth SEK 300 million per year to boost women's entrepreneurship and enhance knowledge and research in this area. The aim is for at least 40 per cent of new entrepreneurs to be women.

As an important part of this initiative, the Government has assigned the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Nutek) to undertake and coordinate a three-year programme for the enhancement of women's entrepreneurship. The overall objective of the programme is both increased business starts among women and increased growth among more companies run by women.

There are four sub-programmes:

- Information, advice and business development
- Specialised projects
- Development of financing opportunities
- Attitudes and role models

### Research on women's entrepreneurship

Research and Innovation for Sustainable Growth (Vinnova) has been allocated SEK 10 million per year for 2007–2009 to finance research on women's entrepreneurship. The aim is to intensify and update this area of research, with a view to make it easier for women to enter the business world and thereby boosting employment in the future.

Business statistics disaggregated by sex are only available to a limited extent. In June 2007, the Government tasked Statistics Sweden (SCB) with developing a database containing data on entrepreneurs and businesses in a gender perspective. This database will make it possible to analyse entrepreneurship among women and men from various angles, including sex, educational background, industry and number of employees etc.

### Women's professional development

In June 2008, the Government assigned the Swedish Administrative Development Agency (Verva) to manage and coordinate a programme for women's professional development in central government in order to boost the proportion of women employed as experts or managers. In 2009, this assignment was taken over by the Swedish Council for Strategic Human Resources Development. The aim is to increase the proportion of state-employed women with specialist skills or expertise or holding managerial positions. Such a development would have the additional advantage of helping to reduce pay gaps between women and men. A total of SEK 17 million is being invested in the programme, which will be the subject of a report to the Government Offices in March 2011.

### SEK 110 million to promote gender equality in schools

In June 2008, the Government presented a gender equality programme for Swedish schools, representing an investment of SEK 110 million. The programme includes the establishment of a special gender equality committee, further training courses for teachers, and measures both to enhance pupils' health and to attract greater numbers of male teachers.

The task of the gender equality committee is to enhance knowledge and awareness of gender equality in schools. The assignment also includes analysing gender differences in educational results, evaluating method and means of overcoming traditional gender roles, and recommending appropriate action. The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement

has been tasked with planning and implementing measures to promote gender equality both in compulsory schools and in similar educational forms, in upper secondary schools and in adult education.

The National Agency for Higher Education has been given the task of analysing gender differences in specialised study choices in teacher training, the reasons why more men than women choose to break off their studies in this training field, the proportion of men who work as teachers on completion of their training, and factors that influence women's and men's study choices in teacher training.

### **SEK 60 million to promote gender equality in higher education**

The Government appointed a committee in February 2009 to promote gender equality in Swedish higher education. The committee will have a budget of SEK 60 million at its disposal up to the end of 2010, and will target the entire higher education sector, i.e. state-run universities and colleges, private education providers authorised to award degrees, and organisations associated with such institutions.

The committee will focus in particular on combating gender-based subject choices and on reversing the trend towards fewer male students in higher education. It will also address gender differences in terms of study rate, dropout and propensity to complete a degree, of career opportunities in research, and of representation at executive level in higher education.

### **Gender mainstreaming**

In Sweden, gender mainstreaming is the principal strategy for achieving the national gender equality policy objectives. Gender mainstreaming means that decisions in all policy areas are to be permeated by a gender equality perspective. Since everyday decisions, the allocation of resources and the establishing of standards all affect gender equality, a gender perspective must be an integral part of day-to-day activities. The strategy has been developed as a means of combating the tendency to neglect gender equality issues or to consider them secondary to other political issues and activities.

### **SEK 125 million to gender equality initiatives at local and regional level**

In December 2007, the Government decided to grant the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions SEK 125, primarily for the purpose of

ensuring that activities and services to citizens are the same whether you are a man or a woman. The funds specifically target efforts to develop gender mainstreaming in the country's municipalities and county councils. This includes training key staff in organisations, building up a web-based knowledge bank for the ongoing dissemination of experience and instructive examples, and developing managerial systems.

### **Support for gender mainstreaming efforts of government agencies**

In July 2008, the Government assigned the University of Gothenburg (National Secretariat for Gender Research) to support the efforts of government agencies to promote gender mainstreaming.

The assignment includes:

- Further developing gender mainstreaming methods
- Creating a forum for exchanges of experience concerning gender mainstreaming
- Disseminating information about gender mainstreaming
- Paving the way for long-term support for gender mainstreaming

The total cost of the assignment is estimated at SEK 13 million.

### **Women's health**

The Swedish Government has tasked the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS) with initiating a research programme on women's health. SEK 30 million per year has been allocated for the purpose for the period 2008–2010. The research programme aims to enhance knowledge and to build up research environments able to continue developing once the project period ends.

### **Gender equality bonus**

On 1 July 2008, the Government introduced a gender equality bonus in the parental insurance system. The aim is to boost gender equality in terms both of parental leave and of participation in working life. The gender equality bonus is intended to encourage parents to share parental leave as evenly as possible. Under this reform, when the parent who has been home the longest works, that parent receives a tax credit while the other parent is claiming parental benefit.

### **Deduction for household-related services**

On 1 July 2007, household-related services became tax-deductible. The deduction effectively reduces the cost of buying such services by around 50 per cent. One of the aims of introducing tax relief in this area is to enable members of the household to increase their time in gainful employment and to make it easier for women and men to combine family life and working life on equal terms.

### **Gender equality in the cultural sector**

The Swedish Government has earmarked a total of SEK 6 million during the period 2007–2009 for efforts to promote gender equality in the performing arts and the cultural sector. The funds are intended primarily for initiatives and projects that encourage and support the development of greater equality in the performing arts.

### **Government grants for women's organisations and gender equality projects**

Each year, the National Board for Youth Affairs distributes SEK 28 million in grants to promote women's organisations. The aim is to promote women's participation in the democratic process and in public life by providing funds to women's organisations and to encourage their participation in the democratic process and public life, and by enabling them to look after their rights and interests and to push their demands.

The board also distributes SEK 6.9 million per year in grants to projects designed to promote gender equality. Grants are available for projects that reflect the Government's subgoals for gender equality policy.

### **Government grants for gender equality among national minorities**

The Swedish Government wants women from national minorities to gain a stronger position in society. In April 2008, it instructed the National Board for Youth Affairs to distribute grants to organisations to encourage their efforts to promote gender equality among national minorities. The assignment also includes developing forms for cooperation between the country's national minorities on gender equality-related matters. A total of SEK 6.5 million has been allocated for the purpose up to and including 2010.

### **Grants to the parliamentary parties' women's organisations**

As of 2008, a new grant of SEK 15 million is made available each year to support the parliamentary parties' women's organisations. The aim is to encourage women's organisations and strengthen their role in society.



  
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All inquiries about content should be directed to the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, tel +46 8 405 10 00. Additional copies of the fact sheet can be ordered from the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, tel +46 8 405 10 00. The Government's website: <http://www.sweden.gov.se>

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*Source:* <http://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/b976096466234d518d56ad561e02088d/the-swedish-governments-gender-equality-policy> Accessed on June 16, 2016.

## Gender equality in Sweden



Fathers in Sweden average spend about one-fourth of the parental leave. Photo: Susanne Walström/imagebank.sweden.se: OUrce: *sweden.se*

*Gender equality is one of the cornerstones of Swedish society. The aim of Sweden's gender equality policies is to ensure that women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and obligations in all areas of life.*

### **The Swedish approach to fairness**

The overarching principle is that everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to work and support themselves, to balance career and family life, and to live without the fear of abuse or violence. Gender equality implies not only equal distribution between men and women in all domains of society. It is also about the qualitative aspects, ensuring that the knowledge and experience of both men and women are used to promote progress in all aspects of society. The annual Global Gender Gap Report, introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006, measures equality in the areas of economics, politics, education and health. Since the report's inception, Sweden has never finished lower than fourth in the Gender Gap rankings.



### **Gender equality at school**

Gender equality is strongly emphasised in the Education Act, the law that governs all education in Sweden. It states that gender equality should reach and guide all levels of the Swedish educational system.

### **Parental leave**

An extensive welfare system that promotes a healthy work–life balance has been an important factor in making Sweden a gender-egalitarian leader. Parents are entitled to share 480 days, or around 16 months, of paid parental leave when a child is born or adopted. This leave can be taken by the month, week, day or even by the hour. Women still use most of the days, with men taking around one-fourth of the parental leave on average. For 390 days, parents are entitled to nearly 80 per cent of their pay, up to a maximum of SEK 942 per day. The remaining 90 days are paid at a flat daily rate of SEK 180. Those who are not in employment are also entitled to paid parental leave....Parents who share the transferable leave allowance equally get a SEK 50 tax-free daily bonus for a maximum of 270 days. Adopting parents are entitled to a total of 480 days between them from the day the child comes under their care. A single parent is entitled to the full 480 days.

### **Women and men at work**

Sweden has come a long way in making sure that women and men are treated equally in the workplace. But pay differences remain, and in the Swedish private sector the proportion of women in top positions remains weak. Two main sections of the Discrimination Act deal with gender equality at work. First, there is the requirement that all employers must actively pursue specific goals to promote equality between men and women. Second, the law prohibits discrimination and obliges employers to investigate and take measures against any harassment. Also, employers must not unfairly treat any employee or job applicant who is, has been or will be taking parental leave.

The Swedish government strives to ensure that power and resources are distributed fairly between the sexes, and to create the conditions that give women and men the same power and opportunities.



Sweden has one of the world's highest representations of women in parliament.  
Photo: Melker Dahlstrand/Riksdagen

Sweden has one of the world's highest representations of women in parliament. After the 2014 election, 43.6 per cent (152) of the 349 seats were taken by women. Nevertheless, it was a drop from 45 per cent in the 2010 elections. At present, 12 of the 24 government ministers are women.

### **Gender mainstreaming**

Gender mainstreaming, a term coined by the United Nations in 1997, describes the incorporation of the gender equality perspective into the work of government agencies at all levels. The idea is that gender equality is not a separate, isolated issue but a continual process. To create equality, the concept of equality must be taken into account when resources are distributed, norms are created and decisions are taken.

In Sweden, gender mainstreaming is seen as the main strategy for achieving targets within equality policy. In 2014, the government assigned 41 government agencies to work actively with gender mainstreaming from 2015 to 2018 in a collective called the Gender Mainstreaming in Government Agencies (GMGA) programme. Their goal is to integrate gender equality in all aspects of each agency's work. The government has allocated SEK 26 million for the four-year period.

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### **Appendix: C above:**

**Source:** <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/> accessed on June 16, 2016

**Appendix D: Tables for Chapter 5**

<b>5.1 (a) and (b) Age composition of the respondents</b>							
Age group	No. of respondents			vertical %		horizontal %	
	Male	Female	Total	% Male Respondents	% female respondents	% Male Respondents	% female respondents
18-22	22	31	53	46.8	47.7	41.5	58.5
23-27	22	29	51	46.8	44.6	43.1	56.9
28-32	3	5	8	6.4	7.7	37.5	62.5
total	47	65	112	100.0	100.0	42.0	58.0
<b>5.2(a) and (b) Education Level of the Respondents</b>							
Educational Level	Male	Female	Total	% Male Respondents	% female respondents		
Post-Graduate	5	15	20	10.6	23.1	25	75
Graduate	22	29	51	46.8	44.6	43.1	56.9
Higher Studies/ Research	9	6	15	19.1	9.2	60	40
Others	6	5	11	12.8	7.7	54.5	45.5
No response	5	10	15	10.6	15.4	33.3	66.7
Total	47	65	112				
<b>5.3 Family Parenting of Respondents</b>							
Family Set-up	No. of Repondents	Father	Mother	Step father	Sibling	Step mother	No response
Female	65	47	59	5	27	4	1
Male	47	32	36	4	12	1	3
Total	112	79	95	9	39	5	4

5.4 (a) Overall participation of family members in Household tasks

Activity	sharing of Household Tasks					Total
	Father only	Mother Only	Both	Other	No Response	
Cleaning	10	64	33	4	1	112
Washing Dishes	25	44	35	5	3	112
Cooking	22	69	19	1	1	112
Ironing	10	64	25	5	8	112
Care work for children	1	59	45	1	6	112
Overall household Task	68	300	157	16	19	560

5.4(b) sharing of household task (Female responses)

Activity	sharing of Household Tasks					Total
	Father only	Mother Only	Both	Other	No Response	
Cleaning	8	35	20	2	0	65
Washing Dishes	13	30	18	2	2	65
Cooking	9	43	12	1	0	65
Ironing	5	39	13	3	5	65
Care work for children	1	33	27	1	3	65
Overall household Task	36	180	90	9	10	325

5.4(c) sharing of household task (male responses)

Activity	sharing of Household Tasks					Total
	Father only	Mother Only	Both	Other	No Response	
Cleaning	2	29	13	2	1	47
Washing Dishes	12	14	17	3	1	47
Cooking	13	26	7	0	1	47
Ironing	5	25	12	2	3	47

Care work for children	0	26	18	0	3	47
Overall household Task	32	120	67	7	9	235

5.5. (a) and (b) Opinion on Successful Implementation of Swedish Gender Policy in Balancing Work-Family

Stand	Favoured (Yes)	Against (No)	No Response	Total	Favoured (Yes)	Against (No)	No Response
Number of Respondents	75	28	9	112	67.0	25.0	8.0
Female	40	21	4	65	61.54	32.31	6.15
Male	35	7	5	47	74.47	14.89	10.64

5.6 Various Perspectives to Bring Gender Equality:

Concerns	Male	Female	No Response
Sharing of care work and Domestic Responsibility	17	26	
Economic Independence for Women	13	15	
Equal Wage and Equal Opportunity for men and Women	22	37	
Engaging men into transforming gender role relations in Society	5	10	
Acknowledging Gender Equality as a Value for Human Rights: Individual Conscience	13	8	
Mindset Changing through policy means: Gender Mainstreaming	9	14	
Respondents Who confirmed all the perspective	10	15	1

### 5.7: Knowledge of Gender-Mainstreaming

	Yes	No	No Response
Male	15	85	0
Female	22	77	1
Total	19	80	1

### 5.8: Sweden: A Gender Equal Society

	Yes/Very Much	Less/No	No Response
Male	66	32	2
Female	46	48	6
Total	55	41	4

### 5.9 (a) and (b): Gender Equality in Sweden in comparison to other European Countries.

Gender Equality in Sweden in comparison other European economies										
	Scale									
	(-) 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	(+) 10
<b>France</b>										
Male	2	2	3	6	14	7	6	2	0	0
Female	0	4	4	14	12	7	1	1	0	0
<b>Spain</b>	(-) 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	(+) 10
Male	2	3	7	9	13	6	3	0	0	0
Female	0	4	8	13	15	1	2	0	0	0
<b>Sweden</b>	(-) 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	(+) 10
Male	0	0	1	1	1	2	10	22	5	2
Female	0	0	0	0	2	7	20	12	6	1
<b>Germany</b>	(-) 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	(+) 10
Male	0	0	1	2	7	12	12	9	0	0
Female	0	0	0	1	12	10	15	7	0	0

### 5.10: Nature of Political culture and value system in Sweden

Nature of Political culture and Value System in Sweden					
Socio-cultural Value System	Male	Female	Total	% Male Respondents	% Female Respondents
Highly Rational	16	6	22	34.0	9.2
Modern	18	37	55	38.3	56.9
Religious	1	1	2	2.1	1.5
Secular	8	8	16	17.0	12.3
Consevative	0	0	0	0.0	0.0
No Response	4	13	17	8.5	20.0

### 5.11: Swedish Gender Policy: A Model for the European Union

Swedish Gender Policy: A Model for the European Union			
	Male	Female	Total
Very Low	2	2	4
Low	2	3	5
Medium	23	21	44
High	13	15	28
Very High	6	10	16
No Response	1	14	15

### 5.12: Opinions on Effectiveness of Policies for bringing Gender Equality

		(very low possibility)	2	3	4	(Very high Possibility)	No Response
		1				5	
Parental Leave	Male	0	2	16	16	12	0
	Female	2	3	17	15	14	5
Child Care	Male	0	3	20	15	8	0
	Female	2	4	15	21	10	14
Individual Taxation	Male	1	7	18	16	8	1
	Female	1	6	21	13	11	14
Equal Treatment in the Labour Market	Male	0	7	16	11	12	0
	Female	2	3	19	13	14	15

5.13: Women's choices over their life, marriage and career

	Male	Female
Yes	40	39
No	1	2
To some extent	1	8
No response	5	16
Total	47	65



## Appendix E:

List of Universities visited along with the invitation letter

### 1. Stockholm University:

Contact Person: Prof. Gerda Neyer  
Demographic Studies (Dept. of Sociology)  
Stockholm University,  
Stockholm, Sweden

A copy of E-mail communication

Print - Close Window - Click More at the bottom of the email to print a single message

<b>Subject:</b>	guest office
<b>From:</b>	Gerda Neyer (gerda.neyer@sociology.su.se)
<b>To:</b>	manasi_sinha2003@yahoo.com;
<b>Date:</b>	Friday, 28 February 2014 11:38 PM

Dear Manasi,


We have booked a desk for you in our guest office. You will share the room. If you would need the room also to do interviews, please let me know so that we can make arrangements that you can have the room to yourself for the times of the interviews. In case you also need a PC or internet access, please let me know so that we can arrange this. (There is WLAN at Stockholm University and Stockholm is part of EDUROAM, so that you can log in via the eduroam of your university, should your university be part of eduroam).

Best wishes,

Gerda

## 2. Uppsala University

Contact person: Prof. Bo Lewin  
Dept. of Sociology  
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January 27, 2014

Ms Manasi Sinha, PhD-student at  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi, India

*Letter of Invitation*

**Dear Ms Manasi Sinha,**


It is with great pleasure I hereby invite you to spend two weeks in April this year at the Department of Sociology as a visiting PhD-candidate. The purpose of your stay here is to further your research on gender issues and to participate in discussions with senior researchers in the Stockholm-Uppsala area and to conduct interviews with researchers and policy makers as well as to look into the possibility of future research collaboration.

In addition to welcoming you and wishing you an academically most rewarding stay, I have to draw your attention to the fact that the Department is not able to take any financial or other responsibility for you except as expressively mentioned in this letter.

You will be provided with an office space with a computer, and use of customary office supplies. The Department will also arrange a temporary affiliation granting you permission to use the University Library and granting access to University premises. Neither the Department nor the University will, however, take any financial responsibility for you, and you will have to arrange – and pay – for your lodging yourself. You are strongly advised to look into your insurance situation, and make sure that you bring with you all documents needed in connection with your stay in Sweden.

These are the harsh limitations of economic reality. In contrast to these I wish to convey a warm academic welcome to you, and look forward to our conversations and wish you a most rewarding stay and many interesting discussions here in Uppsala while conducting your planned interviews.

Yours sincerely



**Bo Lewin**  
Professor

**Uppsala universitet**  
**Sociologiska institutionen**  
**Box 624**  
**751 26 UPPSALA**

### 3 Vrije University

Contact person: Prof Alison E. Woodward  
Institute of European Studies  
Vrije University, Brussels, Belgium

