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1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

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SWEDEN

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy and a multiparty parliamentary democracy. The King is Chief of State. The Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister, exercises executive authority. The judiciary is independent.

The Government effectively controls the police, all security organizations, and the armed forces.

Sweden has an advanced industrial economy, mainly market based, and a high standard of living, with extensive social welfare services.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provide effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse. The Government has longstanding programs to deal with violence against women and abuse of children and took steps against trafficking in women. Neo-Nazi violence increased during the year.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1--Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

There were no reports of political or other extrajudicial killings by the government.

A trade union official was killed and his office building burned down in October after he exposed a colleague as a neo-Nazi (see Section 5).

Two policemen were killed by self-confessed neo-Nazis during a bank robbery in May

(see Section 5).

Due to a lack of new evidence, the director of the Public Prosecution Authority halted the investigation into a 1995 case in which a man died in police custody. After a disagreement over the post-mortem findings, the Prosecutor General requested the opinion of the National Board of Health and Welfare, which was pending at year's end. The case remains under review by the Prosecutor General. Nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) remain very interested in the case.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits these abuses, and the authorities generally respect such prohibitions. Complaints of the excessive use of force by the police are infrequent. Thorough investigations have produced no evidence of a systemic problem. Typically, police officers found guilty of abuse are suspended or otherwise disciplined.

After a September clash between police and demonstrators, 10 complaints of use of excessive force were lodged against the police. Protesters did not obtain a permit for the demonstration, and the police arrested 243 persons--mostly youths--after bottles and rocks were thrown.

In 1998 four policemen were fired after being found guilty of committing crimes at work (mostly the use of excessive force). Between January 1997 and June 1998, 12 cases of excessive use of force resulted in disciplinary or criminal sanctions against police.

The police suspect that neo-Nazis were responsible for the June bombing of the car of a journalist who reported on neo-Nazi activity (see Section 5).

Prison conditions meet minimum international standards, and the Government permits visits by human rights monitors.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

Arrests are by warrant. The police must lodge charges within 6 hours against persons detained for disturbing the public order or considered dangerous, and within 12 hours against those detained on other grounds. The law requires arraignment within 48 hours. The time between arrest and the first court hearing may be extended to 96 hours for detainees considered dangerous, likely to destroy evidence, or likely to flee. In cases involving more than one individual and in the case of foreigners, courts can and do order continued detention for 2 weeks at a time while police are investigating. Such detentions can be protracted, particularly in drug cases. Other than such dangerous suspects, detainees routinely are released pending trial. Bail as such does not exist. If a person files for bankruptcy and refuses to cooperate with the official investigation, a court may order detention for up to 3 months, with judicial review every 2 weeks.

The Government does not use forced exile.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the Government respects this provision in practice. The judiciary provides citizens with a fair and efficient judicial process.

The court system is composed of three levels of courts: district courts, a court of appeals, and a Supreme court. All criminal and civil cases are heard first in district court regardless of the severity of the alleged crime.

The Constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary vigorously enforces this right.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law limits home searches to investigations of major crimes punishable by at least 2 years' imprisonment. The authorities respect this provision. Normally the police must obtain court approval for a search or a wiretap. However, a senior police official may approve a search if time is a critical factor or the case involves a threat to life. A parliamentary committee each year reviews all electronic monitoring. An April Ministry of Justice report on the use of wiretapping is under review by the Government. Since only one request for a wiretap has been denied in recent years, NGO's argue that there is insufficient judicial oversight of this procedure.

In 1997 journalistic investigations focused attention on the country's pre-1976 practice of forced sterilization. The majority of persons sterilized were disabled either mentally or physically. Such operations were known for years to have taken place under pre-World War II legislation, most of them without force. It initially was reported that between 1934 and 1976, 62,888 forced sterilizations were carried out, 95 percent of them on women. In 1999 a government-appointed commission concluded that approximately 10,000 to 15,000 of these sterilizations were forced. The commission was to give priority to the question of damages to victims and also look into the possible existence of other categories of victims. The commission concluded its inquiry in May, and Parliament decided that month to pay damages of approximately \$21,000 (175,000 krona) to each victim. Those compensated earlier with \$6,000 (50,000 krona) are to receive the additional \$15,000 (125,000 krona) without having to apply. Since the 1980's, the Government received 130 claims for compensation; it provided compensation in 17 instances, noting formal errors committed in these cases. Each of the 17 persons compensated received approximately \$6,000 (50,000 krona). Ministers expressed regret and astonishment over the practice and how long it continued.

Section 2--Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, and the Government respects these provisions in practice. Most newspapers and periodicals are privately owned. The Government subsidizes daily newspapers, regardless of political affiliation.

Broadcasters operate under a state concession. Until a few years ago, the State had a monopoly over ground-based broadcasting, but a variety of commercial television channels (one ground-based and several via satellite or cable) and several commercial radio stations now exist.

The Government may censor publications containing national security information. A quasi-governmental body excises extremely graphic violence from films, television programs, and videos.

Criticism of child pornography is widespread, and the debate on the legality of ownership of pornographic material continued. A new law criminalizing the possession and handling of child pornography came into effect on January 1, 1999. It also is illegal to publish or distribute such material. The Queen remains a strong and popular advocate of children's rights and an active opponent of child pornography.

The police suspect that neo-Nazis were responsible for the June bombing of the car of a journalist who reported on neo-Nazi activity (see Section 5).

Academic freedom is respected.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for freedom of peaceful assembly, and the Government respects this right in practice. Police require a permit for public demonstrations. The authorities routinely grant such permits, with rare exceptions to prevent clashes between antagonistic groups or due to insufficient police resources to adequately patrol an event.

In an isolated incident, police refused an Amnesty International request to demonstrate outside an embassy in July. Authorities cited insufficient police resources as a justification for refusing the request.

The Constitution provides for freedom of association, and the Government respects this right in practice. A debate began during the year over the possible criminalization of neo-Nazi organizations.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government does not hamper the practice or teaching of any faith.

The country has maintained a state (Lutheran) church for several hundred years, supported by a general "church tax" (although the Government routinely grants exemptions). However, in 1995 the Church of Sweden and the Government agreed to a formal separation, effective in 2000, but the Church still is to receive some state support.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for free movement within, from, and to the country for citizens, and the Government respects these rights in practice.

The law and regulations incorporate the precepts in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. They are also consistent with the European Union's (EU) Dublin Convention. The Government cooperates with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees; it also provides first asylum. In keeping with international agreements, the Government now reviews applications for asylum more thoroughly than before. The number of applications for asylum or residence permits increased in 1998 to 12,844 (from 9,623 in 1997). Applicants included 3,843 Iraqi citizens, 3,466 citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (95 percent of whom were Kosovar Albanians), and 1,331 citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Through July 6,046 persons sought asylum. The Government approved 7,066 applications in 1998; of these 4,980 were for humanitarian reasons. Nearly 11 percent of the country's population is foreign born.

The Government carries out expeditious returns of asylum seekers from EU countries or from countries with which there are reciprocal return agreements. In many cases asylum seekers were deported within 72 hours of arrival, and NGO's were critical of their lack of access to legal counsel. To remedy this the Government is experimenting with pilot programs at selected border crossings to provide expeditious legal assistance. Most of these are cases of persons who passed through or have asylum determinations pending in other EU countries. Applications can remain under consideration for long periods of time with applicants in uncertain status. Because of the appeals process in the courts, cases can extend for several years. These cases are few in number.

The principal complaint of NGO's is that the country lacks a transparent process for making decisions in asylum cases. They maintain that the asylum procedures lack rules to guide the conduct of authorities to ensure legal protection for asylum seekers. The procedures accord great discretion to individuals in decisionmaking positions. According to the NGO's, the decisionmakers use arbitrary, unspecified, and inconsistent criteria. NGO's are particularly critical of the unclear burden of proof and the lack of an appeals process to an independent court.

In 1998 the U.N. Committee Against Torture found merit in four complaints against the Government for seeking to return asylum seekers to countries where they faced risk of torture. In all of the cases the asylum seekers eventually were granted permanent residence on other grounds. The Government conducted a review of the safety of countries that are considered safe third countries. NGO's also raised the issue of insufficient protection for returnees to countries without a reciprocal return agreement. While these countries provide safe asylum, they are often reluctant to accept asylum seekers deported from European countries. Despite the Government's review, late in the year the authorities ordered the deportation of two Iranian asylum seekers to Tehran. The deportation was halted after the U.N. Committee Against Torture decided to review both cases to determine if the individuals would face torture if returned to Tehran.

Between April and August, 3,752 Kosovar Albanian refugees were granted temporary residence permits, initially valid for 11 months. By September 1,000 of the refugees had returned to Kosovo. Sweden has accepted over 100,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia. The Government provides grants to Bosnians to travel to their homeland in order to determine if they wish to be repatriated. It also provides financial incentives for returnees, but there is no forced repatriation. There were no reports of the forced return of persons to a country where they feared persecution.

Section 3--Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercise this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage. Citizens exercised this right most recently in September 1998. Elections to the 349-member unicameral Parliament are held every 4 years. Noncitizen residents have the right to participate in local (city and county) elections.

Women participate actively in the political process and Government. They constitute 43.6 percent of the Parliament and 55 percent of the Cabinet. The governing Social Democratic Party largely kept its pledge to place women in half of all political appointments at all levels.

Section 4--Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Several private organizations actively monitor issues such as the impact of social legislation, anti-immigrant or racist activities, and the condition of the indigenous Sami population. The official ombudsmen publicize abuses of state authority and may initiate actions to rectify such abuses. Government agencies are in close contact with a variety of local and international groups working in the country and abroad to improve human rights observance.

Section 5--Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution provides for equal rights for all citizens, and the Government respects this provision.

Women

There were 20,516 reported cases of assault against women (excluding rape) in 1998, compared with 19,093 in 1997. Most involved spousal abuse. In three-quarters of the assaults, the perpetrator was an acquaintance of the victim. Reported abuse against women occurs disproportionately in immigrant communities. On average 33 murders of women and girls are reported each year, half of them by men closely related to the victim. The number of reported rapes of persons over age 15 was 1,386 in 1998, compared with 1,050 in 1997. The law does not differentiate between spousal and nonspousal rape.

Trafficking in women from Russia and the Baltics for purposes of forced prostitution increased in recent years (see Section 6.f.). The purchase or attempted purchase of sexual services was made illegal as of January 1.

The Government has longstanding programs to deal with violence against women. The law provides complainants protection from contact with their abusers, if so desired. In some cases, the authorities help women obtain new identities and homes. Since 1994 the Government has provided electronic alarms or bodyguards for women in extreme danger of assault. Both national and local governments provide monetary support to volunteer groups that provide shelter and other assistance to abused women. The authorities strive to

apprehend and prosecute abusers. Typically, the sentence for abuse is a prison term or psychiatric treatment. However, women complain about short sentences and the early release of offenders.

The law prohibits sexual harassment. During 1998 the law was amended to specify clearly employer responsibility to prevent and--if applicable--to investigate sexual harassment in the workplace and to formulate and post a specific policy and guidelines for the workplace. Employers who do not investigate and intervene against harassment at work can be obliged to pay damages to the victim. As with other forms of discrimination, women and men may take complaints to the courts or to their unions. To combat gender discrimination in the longer term, the equal opportunities act requires all employers, both in the public and private sector, actively to promote equal opportunities for women and men in the workplace. Employers with a minimum of 10 employees must prepare an annual equal opportunities plan.

Under the country's pre-1976 practice of forced sterilization, thousands of persons were sterilized forcibly between 1934 and 1976. The majority of those sterilized were disabled either mentally or physically, and 95 percent were women. In May Parliament decided to pay damages in such cases (see Section 1.f.).

The Government actively promotes heightened awareness of the need for gender equality by supporting conferences and seminars for employers in the private and public sectors. The Government believes that it implemented the recommendations from the 1995 U.N. Women's Conference in Beijing through changes in the law and new legislation. A law entered into force on January 1 that prohibits buying or even soliciting sexual services; convictions are subject to fines or prison terms of up to 6 months.

The law requires employers to treat men and women alike in hiring, promotion, and pay, including equal pay for comparable work. According to Statistics Sweden, women's salaries were 83 percent of men's salaries in 1997. Considering differences in age, education, and occupational groups between men and women, the adjusted result is on average 93 percent of men's salaries. (A 1998 U.N. Development Program study reported that women's salaries averaged about 78 percent of men's salaries.) The equal opportunities ombudsman, a public official, investigates complaints of gender discrimination in the labor market. Women and men also may pursue complaints through the courts. A third option, and by far the most common, involves settling allegations using the employee's labor union as mediator. In 1998 74 women and 17 men registered gender discrimination cases with the equal opportunities ombudsman. In 1998 three cases were taken to court. In the past, many of these cases involved salary discrimination. In 1998 20 cases were settled by mediation, 31 were withdrawn, and 35 were dropped. The remainder are pending.

All employers with more than 10 employees must prepare an annual equality plan, including a survey of pay differences between male and female employees. The equal opportunities ombudsman reviews these plans.

Children

The Government demonstrates its strong commitment to children's rights and welfare through its well-funded systems of public education and medical care. The Government

provides compulsory, free, and universal primary school education for children for 9 years. It also provides free medical and dental care for all children up to the age of 16 (19 for dental care). Parents receive some \$1,000 per year for each child under 16 years of age. An official children's ombudsman monitors the Governments' programs.

The Government allocates funds to private organizations concerned with children's rights. An NGO, Children's Rights in Society, offers counseling to troubled youngsters. The Government remains active internationally in efforts to prevent child abuse.

Although the physical abuse of children appears relatively uncommon, the public and authorities remain concerned by consistent data indicating an increase over the past several years. The number of reported cases for children under the age of 15 rose to 5,642 in 1998, up from 5,263 in 1997. The number of reported cases of sexual abuse of children under the age of 15 was 2,756 in 1998 and 2,412 in 1997. The U.N. Children's Committee criticized the Government, stating that it provides less protection for the children of immigrant and disadvantaged groups.

The law prohibits parents or other caretakers from abusing children mentally or physically in any way. Parents, teachers, and other adults are subject to prosecution if they physically punish a child, including slapping or spanking. Children have the right to report such abuses to the police. The authorities respect these laws, and the usual sentence is a fine combined with counseling and monitoring by social workers. However, if the situation warrants, authorities may remove children from the home and place them in foster care. Foster parents virtually never receive permission to adopt long-term foster children, even in cases where the parents are seen as unfit or seek no contact with the child. Critics charge that this policy places the rights of biological parents over the needs of children for security in permanent family situations.

Female genital mutilation (FGM), which is widely condemned by international health experts as damaging to both physical and psychological health, is illegal, as is preparing and conspiring to perform such mutilations. Sentences can vary between 2 and 4 years' imprisonment. The failure to report such mutilation is also illegal under current laws. No cases have been reported under this law.

People with Disabilities

With one exception, there are no specific laws prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities, and considerable efforts are made to ensure that the disabled enjoy equal opportunities. A new act that prohibits discrimination against disabled persons in the workplace came into force in May. Since 1994 the country has had an ombudsman for disability issues. The Government provides disabled persons with assistance aimed at allowing them to live as normal a life as possible, preferably outside an institutional setting. This support may include a personal assistant for the severely disabled, plus improvement of the workplace's accessibility to wheelchairs. Government assistance also encompasses services such as home care or group living. Regulations for new buildings require full accessibility, but the Government has no such requirement for existing public buildings. Many buildings and some public transportation remain inaccessible. Deaf children have the right to education in sign language. The parents of disabled children and disabled workers under the age of 65 receive financial assistance every 7 years to buy a car adapted to the person's disability.

Under the country's pre-1976 practice of forced sterilization, thousands of persons were sterilized forcibly between 1934 and 1976. The majority of those sterilized were disabled either mentally or physically (see Section 1.f.). In May Parliament decided to pay damages in such cases.

Indigenous People

The country counts at least 17,000 Sami (formerly known as Lapps) among its 8.85 million inhabitants (Sami organizations place that number somewhat higher, 25,000 to 30,000). In 1994 Sweden was the last of the Nordic countries to allow formation of a Sametinget, or Sami Parliament, as an advisory body to the Government. Under the current Government, Sami issues fall under the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Sami continue a protracted struggle for recognition as an indigenous people under a variety of international agreements, such as International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169. Historically, the government resisted granting the Sami such rights. For example Sami children had no right to education in their native language until the provision of such education to immigrant group children under a 1977 law forced the Government to grant Sami at least equal treatment. As a result of such education, northern Sami dialects have enjoyed a recent renaissance. However, Sami dialects in the southern portions of traditional Sami lands now may have too few native speakers to survive as living languages. In 1997 the Government initiated an inquiry into whether the country could ratify ILO Convention 169. The inquiry was published in May and concluded that the country could ratify the convention, but that this should not be done until a number of steps relating to Sami land rights are taken.

In 1994 the Government removed from the Sami the right to control hunting and fishing activities on Sami village lands, permitting instead totally unlimited hunting and fishing activity on all government property. Sami leaders continued to protest this change during the year.

Some Sami state that they face discrimination in housing and employment on an individual basis, particularly in the southern mountain regions.

Religious Minorities

The Government is taking proactive steps to combat anti-Semitism by increasing awareness of Nazi crimes and the Holocaust. Under its living history project, the Government provides educational material on the Holocaust to schoolchildren and families throughout the country. The media are also active in publicizing and condemning neo-Nazi activity.

The only anti-Semitic incident of note during the year involved an assault by neo-Nazi teenagers on a Jewish musical conductor in July. The teenagers involved were tried and incarcerated.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Approximately 11 percent of Sweden's population is foreign born. "Skinhead" and neo-Nazi related violence increased during the year. Three known neo-Nazis were arrested in

connection with the May shooting death of two police officers during the course of a bank robbery. A trade union official was killed in October after exposing a colleague as a neo-Nazi. Police strongly suspect neo-Nazi perpetrators in the June bombing of the car of a freelance journalist who had written extensively on neo-Nazi activity in the country.

These incidents led to a strong public reaction in favor of a tougher stance against these groups. The four largest daily newspapers mounted a campaign to discredit them by publishing the names and photos of 62 neo-Nazis and featuring editorials against their activities.

Neo-Nazi activity in the past rarely was lethal or appeared well organized and was directed mostly at immigrants. Since 1994 persons arrested and charged for racially motivated attacks received relatively harsh sentences. Although the Government does not compile national statistics on such acts, in recent years there have been approximately 100 violent incidents with racist overtones annually. However, cases during 1999 were notable for the fact that they targeted white, native, non-Jewish citizens.

Most estimates place the number of active neo-Nazis at fewer than 2,000, and there appears to be little popular support for their activities or sentiments. Many citizens doubt whether such youth actually embrace neo-Nazi ideology, and the Government supports activities by volunteer groups working against racism. The Government investigates and prosecutes race-related crimes, although in many clashes between Swedish and immigrant youth gangs, authorities judge both sides to be at fault. Neo-Nazi groups operate legally, but serious discussion is taking place about outlawing such groups. The Supreme Court has ruled that it can be illegal to wear xenophobic symbols or racist paraphernalia. Rightwing groups, which have and exercise the right to demonstrate, are not permitted to display signs and banners with provocative symbols at their rallies.

The ombudsman for racial discrimination reported in August that racial discrimination in the workplace is increasing. The report stated that 21 percent of persons interviewed claim to have experienced racial or ethnic discrimination in hiring practices.

Section 6--Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The work force is approximately 80 percent unionized. Career military personnel, police officers, and civilian government officials, as well as private sector workers in both manufacturing and service industries, are organized. Most business owners belong to counterpart employer organizations.

Unions and employer organizations operate independently of the Government and political parties (although the largest federation of unions has always been linked with the largest political party, the Social Democrats). The law protects the freedom of workers to associate and to strike, as well as for employers to organize and to conduct lockouts. Within limits protecting the public's immediate health and security, public employees also enjoy the right to strike. These laws are fully respected and are not challenged.

Unions have the right to affiliate with international bodies. They are affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the European Trade Union

Confederation among others.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Management-labor cooperation tends to be excellent and nonconfrontational. Labor and management, each represented by a national organization by sector (for example retailers and engineering industries), negotiate framework agreements every 2 to 3 years. More detailed company-level agreements put such framework agreements into effect at the local level. New framework agreements were signed during 1998 with most valid until 2001. In contrast with the recent past, most agreements with labor unions now provide for a degree of individualized pay, including merit bonuses.

The law provides both workers and employers with effective mechanisms for resolving complaints. The vast majority of complaints are resolved informally. The law protects union officials and members from dismissal or reprisals for official union activities. In some instances, unions even demand collective agreements regardless of the views and union status of employees. The Government is studying ways to strengthen the system of public mediation. Very few strikes took place during 1998--four legal and seven illegal--lasting half a day to a few days and involving few individuals.

Agreement was reached in 1997 between 12 employer associations and 8 unions representing 800,000 manufacturing employees on steps to prevent strikes and lockouts, such as requiring serious wage negotiations to start 3 months before a collective agreement expires and appointing a mediator if an agreement has not been reached after 2 months. As a result of this agreement, wages increased during 1997 by 2.5 to 3 percent following negotiations. This cooperation continued in 1998 and led to wage increases of approximately 3.7 percent.

There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, and the authorities effectively enforce this ban. The law prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, and the Government enforces this prohibition effectively.

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

Compulsory 9-year education ends at age 16, and the law permits full-time employment at that age under the supervision of local authorities. Employees under age 18 may work only during the daytime and under supervision. During summer and other vacation periods, children as young as 13 years may work part time or in "light" work with parental permission. Union representatives, police, and public prosecutors effectively enforce this restriction. The law prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, and the Government enforces this prohibition effectively (see Section 6.c.).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no national minimum wage law. Wages are set by collective bargaining contracts, which nonunion establishments usually observe as well. Even the lowest paid workers can

maintain a decent standard of living for themselves and their families through substantial benefits (such as housing or day care support) provided by social welfare entitlement programs. However, cutbacks in these programs have made it harder for some workers to make ends meet, particularly low-paid single women with children.

The standard workweek is 40 hours or less. Both the law and collective bargaining agreements regulate overtime and rest periods. For workers not covered by a labor agreement, the law stipulates a limit for overtime at 200 hours a year, although exceptions may be granted for key employees with union approval; some collective bargaining agreements put the limit at 150 hours. The law requires a rest period after 5 hours of work but does not stipulate a minimum duration; in practice it is usually 30 minutes. The law also provides all employees with a minimum of 5 weeks of paid annual leave; labor contracts often provide more, particularly for higher ranking private sector employees and older public service workers. In 1997 the Government passed a new labor law making it easier for employers to hire workers for limited periods, as well as empowering local unions to agree to exceptions to last-in, first-out laws.

Currently the focus of concern regarding health and safety is on the psychosocial aspect. Occupational health and safety rules are set by a government-appointed board and monitored by trained union stewards, safety ombudsmen, and, occasionally, government inspectors. These standards are very high, making workplaces both safe and healthy. Safety ombudsmen have the authority to stop unsafe activity immediately and to call in an inspector. An individual also has the right to halt work in dangerous situations in order to consult a supervisor or safety representative.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law does not prohibit such trafficking, although traffickers are prosecuted under other statutes. A March report by the authorities set out a baseline on the extent of trafficking in 1998 after a survey of local police and the courts. A total of 5 traffickers and 12 women were involved in 4 court cases during 1998. Only one case was completed with a conviction. In all four cases, the traffickers were resident immigrants. The women involved came from Estonia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. The women are typically recruited by their countrymen who advertise in their local newspapers for work as cleaners or babysitters. Other women were "purchased" from traffickers and brought into the country. The report noted that considerable additional information available to the police suggests that the problem of trafficking is more widespread than the four court cases indicate

A 1998 study by the Foundation Women's Forum (FWF) indicated that there are very few organizations in the EU that monitor trafficking, but that those opposed to prostitution recognize the need for greater efforts. The FWF applied for an EU grant to work further on this problem.

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