

**“Gender Based Violence
in Academia and
Reflections Linking to the
Pandemic”**

EWORA WEBINAR, 19 MARCH 2021

SUMMARY REPORT



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The pandemic is challenging in many different ways and as academic leaders we are working very hard right now to enable a good work environment for our students and staff. Experiences of frustration is common due to the pandemic and peoples' everyday situations might be complex in different ways.

In the first EWORA webinar in November, we discussed the consequences for female professors and that there is a risk for a growing gender imbalance within academia due to the pandemic. The work-life balance within couples during the pandemic is important to study and during the webinar, professor Lotta Löfgren-Mårtensson at Malmö University presented some preliminary findings from an ongoing European research study.

However, the main topic of the webinar was the presentation of an ongoing national research and collaboration program in Sweden in Gender Based Violence and Sexual Harassment in Academia.

The programme was initiated by KI, KTH, Malmö University and the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research at the university of Gothenburg, but is based on collaboration between the higher education institutions in Sweden. A network of contact persons at the institutions who wish to be active in the programme will continuously provide input into the programme's design and organization. A scientific reference group is given opportunities to influence the scientific direction and content of the programme (<https://ki.se/en/gender-programme>) .

The goal of the programme is to establish research-based knowledge of inclusive work and study environments and a sustainable organization for the prevention of sexual harassment and gender-based violence and victimization in academia. The programme will, by extension, contribute to strengthening and intensifying work on academia's organizational culture, with a focus on quality, sustainable development, work environment, leadership, equality and equal opportunities.

Background

The experience-based stories that emerged during #metoo have shown the extent and consequences of different forms of gender-based violence and victimization - at the individual, organizational and societal levels. However, research, both internationally and in Sweden, shows that we know too little about prevalence, causes and consequences. The programme aims to, with an interdisciplinary approach, contribute to the creation of new knowledge both theoretically and empirically as well as to develop the work with prevention and promotion. By applying a critical perspective on sexual harassment, we want to invite an examination of academia's organization and structures and thereby contribute to sustainable change.

The programme in brief

The programme aims to create a common platform for the work against sexual harassment and gender-based violence in academia.

The programme will include the following activities:

- A national study of prevalence, causes and consequences of sexual harassment and gender-based violence and victimization in the entire Swedish higher education sector.
- Development of new research-based knowledge of sexual harassment and gender-based violence and victimization in various contexts of the academy: at the individual, organizational and sectoral level that can serve as support in development work and
- Common platforms, arenas and networks for both research collaborations and opportunities for joint improvement work.

The first task of the programme will be to identify sexual harassment and gender-based violence and victimization at a cross-sectoral level through a national study. The study will identify occurrence, causes and consequences and from an intersectional perspective. The study will include 125 000 respondents (students, doctoral students and staff) active at 38 higher educational institutions in Sweden. Based on the results of the study and existing research, the higher education institutions, both individually and jointly, will be able to initiate various research and development projects. The various arenas for collaboration provide a frame for this work.

[Read more about the national research study on gender-based violence.](#)

Professor Anna Wahl who is the chair of the steering group of the collaboration-program presented the program during the webinar. She is also professor in gender, organization and management, but also vice rector at Royal Institute of Technology.

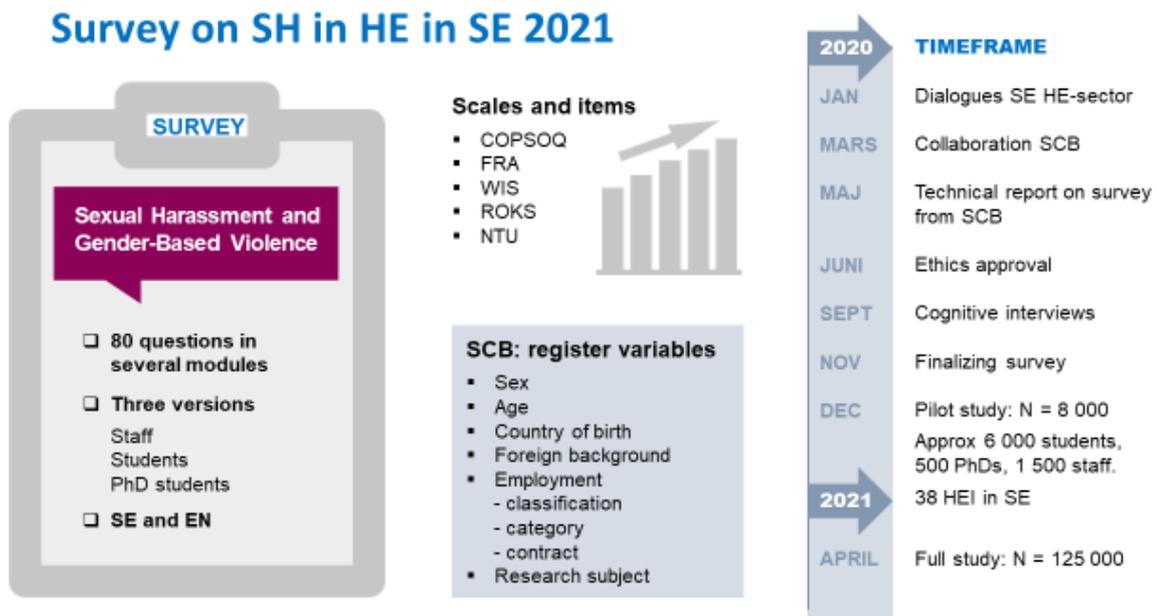
Thereafter, Fredrik Bondestam who is the director of the Swedish secretariat for Gender research at University of Gothenburg, presented the national survey and some preliminary

findings from the pilot study of the national survey – linked to the program – but also preliminary findings from an ongoing EU funded project within this area of research:



- **H2020, 3 800 000 EUR, 9 partners, 2021-24**
- **Survey on GBV and SH:** 45 RPOs in 15 MS (N=450 000)
- **Case-studies:** 15 MS
- **Mapping of legal and policy frameworks:** EU27
- **7P research model:** prevalence, prevention, protection, prosecution, provision of services, partnerships and policy

An overview of the planned Swedish national Survey is shortly presented in the picture below:



And finally, professor Lotta Löfgren-Mårtensson presented some preliminary findings of an ongoing European COST action study about *Covid-19 and couples' work-life balance during the pandemic*.

Previous research has shown that:

- The COVID-10 pandemic has changed sociocultural habits, economic activities and psychological health, such as increased prevalence of depression.
- There is an increased vulnerability concerning family violence and violence against women and reduced options for support during COVID-19 restrictions.
- Several quantitative studies show a decrease in sexual activity during 2020 (e.g. US, China, Turkey, Italy, UK, India, Ireland).
- Uncertainty and misinformation about the sexual routes of transmission for COVID-19, and consequently, fear about intimacy and sexuality might lead to sexual disorders.
- Ability to adapt is a key feature, characterizing high-level satisfaction and marital quality relationships.

The aim of this on-going study was to explore how partnered individuals describe and experience intimacy and sexuality within their long-term relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic in Croatia, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey.

The aim was, furthermore, to look deeper into : How do partnered individuals summarize their experiences of intimacy and sexuality in relation to external stress such as the COVID-19 pandemic?

A few examples of overarching patterns in the preliminary findings are:

- Positive couple boundaries seem to remain through external crisis – work life balance
- Problematic couple boundaries seem to increase through external crisis – work life imbalance
- Family situation influences on couple boundaries and work life balance, despite external crisis

Conclusions, so far:

- The COVID-19 pandemic opens for options of more time, less stress and therefore, a better work life balance for a lot of families.
- However, this works for those, who live within “stable” relationships, without illness, economical stress etc., and for those, who can fulfill their job missions from home.
- For others, the pandemic has triggered both old or new problems, which influences both on work life balance and on the relationship between the couples in a negative way.

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Future plans: Colleagues in the network of EWORA will be able to follow the development of the knowledge derived from the Swedish national study of prevalence, causes and consequences of sexual harassment and gender-based violence and victimization in the entire Swedish higher education sector. The data collection will be conducted in May- June 2021.

The colleagues in the EWORA network will also be able to learn from the future findings of the two EU funded ongoing projects presented during the webinar by Fredrik Bondestam and Charlotta Löfgren-Mårtensson.