

For gender equality in regional development

Declaration of intentions
of Nutek and NRC

Foreword

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (hereafter: Nutek) and the Swedish National Federation of Resource Centres for Women (hereafter: NRC) are two players who act through different roles towards a common goal; Gender equality in regional development. This declaration of intentions shall be seen as part of a national cooperation concerning gender equality within regional development.

In this way, we aim to emphasise our common direction and invite to cooperation on all levels. The organisations however, are responsible for their respective part of the declaration.

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Nutek's declaration of intentions

According to the government proposition, En politik för tillväxt och livskraft i hela landet¹ (*Read: A policy for vitality and growth in the whole country*), the overall goal of regional development policy shall be, well-functioning and sustainable labour market regions with good service levels in all parts of the country.

The proposition states that special resources shall be allocated for strengthening women's situation on the labour market, as entrepreneurs, and to make use of their initiatives and competences in the regional development work. Another aim is to strengthen central and regional government bodies' ability to handle projects involving women. This will also strengthen the degree to which women are able to take part of government resources available for regional and local development. Thereby, women shall in the future be able to act in regional development work, under the same terms and conditions as men.

This direction was reinforced when the government appointed local and regional resource centres to take part in drawing up the regional growth programmes for 2004-2007².

Nutek shall contribute to an increased cooperation between different policy areas for sustainable, regional development through its programs within regional development. Nutek shall also contribute to an increased coordination between the overall planning of regional development and regional programmes with operative focus. Furthermore, Nutek shall initiate and support programmes and projects, primarily through the regional growth programmes, that contribute to a sustainable regional growth.

During 1998-2004, Nutek distributed SEK 157 million to 546 local and regional resource centre projects³. During 2002-2005, SEK 10 million has been distributed annually to resource centres in form of basic funding. The purpose of the basic funding is to enable the development of projects through funding of costs such as salaries, premises, administration and horizontal cooperation between resource centres. During the period 2003-2005, the number of resource centres has doubled. The basic funding means

¹ En politik för tillväxt och livskraft i hela landet. Regeringens proposition (*Read: A policy for vitality and growth in the whole country, Government proposition*) 2001/02:4.

² Uppdrag att utarbete förslag till regionala tillväxtprogram, Regeringsbeslut, (*Read: Assignment to draw up suggestions for growth programmes, Government decision*) 2002-11-14, dnr N2002/10715/RUT (part) N 2002/9153/RUT.

³ R 2004:14 Resurscentra för kvinnor- en kraft för hållbar regional utveckling? (*Read: Resource centres for women – a force for sustainable regional growth?*) Nutek.

are therefore far from equivalent to the needs of the resource centres.

Basic funding is a determining factor for the ability to pursue national and international projects. This conclusion has been drawn in the proposition as well as in Nutek's evaluation of means to resource centres 1998-2002⁴.

Nutek has the ambition to work for an increased basic funding to secure the long-term work of local and regional resource centres. An important step in achieving this is to clarify the role of resource centres in the regional development work.

Nutek and NRC have begun an effort to develop models and quality indicators for resource centres in their work towards gender equality in regional development. This declaration of intentions is a first step in this process. Nutek aims, in dialogue with the regional level, to focus on national, strategic projects of experimental nature. Nutek will place great emphasis on the continuous follow-up of Nutek's goals and means for the running of resource centres. This will contribute to the development of knowledge and methods as well as learning by all parts involved. These plans are also part of Nutek's ambition to develop a node of knowledge in gender equality within regional development. This ambition is one of the suggestions in the assignment to identify areas of coordination stated in the National policy coherence for regional development⁵.

⁴ R 2004:14. Resurscentra för kvinnor - en kraft för hållbar regional utveckling? (*Read: Resource centres for women – a force for sustainable regional growth?*) Nutek

⁵ R 2003:13. Nationell samordning för regional utveckling. Slutrapport 1 oktober 2003. (*Read: National policy coherence for regional development. Conclusive report 1 October, 2003*) Nutek.

Swedish National Federation of Resource Centres for Women's (NRC) declaration

The organisation for resource centres works to promote women's potential and their part in a sustainable development of society. The resource centre is a place where women have precedence in voicing which issues to bring forth and pursue in regional and local development and in the work with the Regional Growth and Regional Development programmes⁶. In this work, the resource centre for women can be utilised as a system of innovation for regional growth and development.

The regional and local resource centres and associated networks are members of the Swedish National Federation of Resource Centres for Women (NRC). The organisation has been formed and developed over a period of 10 years. Today, there are approximately 150 resource centres and networks for women in Sweden. Approximately 9000 women and 100 men are active in the organisation. Today, approximately 100 regional and local resource centres and networks for women are members of the NRC. To strengthen the level of participation and the perspective of local needs and conditions, the organisation has developed three regional councils for Northern, Middle and Southern Sweden.

Resource centres for women shall work for women taking their part in using the resources of society, and for a society where women's competences are embraced and where women's and men's work are equally valued⁷.

Resource centres shall carry out public opinion and spread the knowledge of women's life situation. By influencing and collaborating with organisations and authorities on national and international levels, resource centres shall work for a society where women's possibilities, rights and obligations are utilised. Power and influence shall be distributed equally among women and men. Resource centres shall also work for the realisation of equal conditions among women and men in terms of work, working conditions, development opportunities and running of enterprises⁸.

⁶ Jämställdhet skapar tillväxt, seminariedokumentation (*Read: Gender equality creates growth, seminar documentation*) www.nrckvinnor.org

⁷ Ändamålsparagraf ur NRCs stadgar (*Read: Purpose paragraph, NRC statutes*) www.nrckvinnor.org

⁸ Ibid

Resource centres in Sweden work with different subject areas such as women's labour market, integration, entrepreneurship and the running of enterprises, leadership issues, health, women and technology and young women's conditions and possibilities.

The following conditions are required in order for resource centres for women to fulfil this mission; a long-term perspective and economic resources, legitimacy, local, regional and national activity, coordination, international networks, knowledge of gender issues and criteria/indicators for securing the quality of the activities.

Long-term perspective and economic resources

A national basic funding for resource centres must be secured. The organisation for resource centres for women has developed into an important player in supporting women's participation and equal contribution in growth and development-related areas both locally, regionally as well as nationally and internationally. Economic resources are required to drive this commitment in the long-term. Economic resources are also a pre-condition for legitimacy. Each resource centre requires an economic base. A reasonable level for each regional resource centre is SEK 1 million per year, for each local resource centre SEK 750.000 per year, and for NRC's horizontal coordination SEK 2 million per year.

It is suggested that the financial resources should be utilised to make it possible for resource centre activities to focus on innovative and creative solutions for development and growth. It is also suggested that the resources be used to co-finance development projects announced by the EU and Swedish government that are concerned with increasing women's involvement. Other conceivable areas of use are for instance, activities to increase women's entrepreneurship and to strengthen and develop existing enterprises as well as activities to increase women's part within the areas of technology and natural science.

During 2004, it was determined that the resource centres for women shall act within the framework of the Swedish national action plan for employment. This provides an opportunity to increase the cooperation between regional employment services within women's labour market, entrepreneurship and running of enterprises, health, women and technology and young women's conditions and possibilities.

Coordination

The strength and hallmark of the resource centres is the integration of activities on local, regional and national levels. Fundamental, is maintaining the perspective of local needs and conditions. Work for change on a local level guarantees the sustainability of the efforts. Local and regional resource centres is a collaborative player and regional resource within the framework of the counties' growth and development work in cooperation with organisations and authorities. Larger projects can be coordinated on a regional/county basis.

International networks

The Swedish resource centre model has received a lot of attention abroad during the past few years. The knowledge within the resource centres and experiences gained through inter-regional, trans-national and international projects shall be utilised for local and regional development, for Sweden's growth. Resource centres shall play a part in the continued inter-regional collaboration in an expanded Europe.

Knowledge of gender issues

The task of the resource centres presupposes competence and ability to perform gender analysis in the daily work. The resource centres' area of responsibility concerns women's participation in regional and local development and can complement the gender equality work driven by regional experts in gender issues at the county administrative boards. The dialogue needs to be developed and the division of roles needs to be clarified.

Quality indicators/criteria

A resource centre for women fulfils the following criteria:

- it works accordingly with the purposes defined in the statutes of the Swedish National Federation of Resource Centres (NRC) (see previous reference).
- it is legitimated by the demands of women in the area
- it is open for women and resource centres in its area
- it is a meeting place for work in accordance with the purposes in the statutes
- it is supported by authorities and organisations in its area

- it takes an independent part in regional or local development
- it has a working plan; annual accounting and evaluation to monitor it
- it has a board of directors or a steering committee
- it is a non-profit organisation

NRC shall in cooperation with Nutek further develop quality indicators within the prioritised subject areas that resource centres are active within. In this work, NRC will co-operate with the regional councils to develop the trademark/hallmark of *resource centres for women*.

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