



**Diskriminerings  
ombudsmannen**

**DO – working for a society  
free from discrimination**





**Lars Arrhenius** has been the equality ombudsman and director general of the Equality Ombudsman since 2020. He has set the direction of the authority's activities:

**"DO exists to serve people who are subjected to discrimination or at risk of being discriminated against. Our priority is to investigate more cases in order to ensure that people who have been subjected to discrimination can obtain redress."**

# Freedom from discrimination is a human right

The protection against discrimination is based on the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Discrimination Act and the Act concerning the Equality Ombudsman are linked to the Instrument of Government, the European Convention on Human Rights and several UN conventions, as well as the fundamental rights under EU law and several EU directives.

DO conducts supervision of the Discrimination Act and has the task of ensuring that it is complied with. In accordance with the Act concerning the Equality Ombudsman, we also

- work to ensure that discrimination does not occur in any areas of society
- work in other respects to promote equal rights and opportunities regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.

The Act concerning the Equality Ombudsman also grants us a broad remit that includes us educating and engaging in dialogues with various stakeholders, following international developments and having contacts with international organisations, and following research and development work. In this publication we explain how we carry out the remit assigned to use by the act.

## **Our independent role means that we are able to act**

In order to safeguard our independence and autonomy in relation to the government, our basic remit and responsibilities are governed by law. The fact that it is the Swedish Parliament that makes decisions on our remit also gives weight to our activities, both for those who are subjected to discrimination, and in relation to other public bodies.

## **We investigate discrimination and request compensation**

DO conducts supervision to ensure that the Discrimination Act is complied with. A core aspect of our work is to intervene to ensure that individuals subjected to discrimination obtain redress. We do this by, for example, receiving and investigating complaints. Our investigations can lead to DO requesting discrimination compensation, entering into settlements or taking proceedings to court.

We are also able to make supervisory decisions, which means that DO expresses an opinion on whether an organisation is in breach of the Discrimination Act. Such decisions help to clarify what the law entails and contribute to preventing future discrimination.

We are made up of just over 100 employees working towards the same goal and vision – a society free from discrimination. We are primarily made up of lawyers, social scientists, communications officers and administrators.

## We can act on behalf of individuals in court

We are able to act on behalf of individuals in court. We do this, for example, if the opposing party (whom DO deems guilty of discrimination) does not pay discrimination compensation when DO has requested this. In such cases the court decides whether discrimination has occurred and decides what level of compensation the opposing party is to pay to the individual (the complainant).

DO can also act on behalf of people who have been disadvantaged by employers

- in connection with their parental leave
- when they request or utilise the right to leave or flexible working arrangements for the care of children, relatives or others for family reasons.

## Examples of cases we have pursued

- **Ethnicity:** A man who suffered a cerebral haemorrhage was deprioritised by paramedics. He later died from his injury. DO took the case to the District Court which made the assessment that the man had been subjected to discrimination associated with ethnicity. The case went to the Court of Appeal. However, the parties agreed on a settlement before the court hearing took place. The settlement meant that the District Court's ruling stood, and that the region involved paid the requested discrimination compensation to the estate of the deceased person (SEK 300,000).
- **Disability:** A municipality admitted that a pupil who had not been offered sufficient support measures in school had been discriminated against in the form of inadequate accessibility. The municipality entered into a settlement with DO and paid the requested discrimination compensation to the pupil (SEK 90,000).
- **Age:** In a supervisory decision, DO made the assessment that a foundation has subjected a man to discrimination associated with age. This was because younger applicants were given priority when allocating rental apartments. After the decision, the foundation modified its rules for allocating apartments and removed the criteria that DO had found to be discriminatory.

## **Dialogue with civil society is key**

Civil society organisations play an important role in the work to combat discrimination. This is why we hold regular dialogue meetings with representatives from civil society (for example various voluntary organisations and religious communities). Our dialogues with independent anti-discrimination agencies that combat discrimination on a local level are particularly important.

These dialogues are crucial to our efforts to ensure that more individuals learn about the protection against discrimination and are encouraged to complain to DO. They contribute to ensuring that complaints contain the information needed to allow us to initiate investigations of alleged discrimination. In addition, dialogues are a key source of knowledge about experiences of discrimination.

## **We make discrimination visible and produce support materials**

An important part of our work involves regularly reporting on the incidence of discrimination and highlighting obstacles to equal rights and opportunities. This knowledge creates opportunities for different stakeholders in society to take action to combat and prevent discrimination. Knowledge is the foundation of our work in relation to, for example, public authorities and decision makers at various levels and within different areas of society. It is also important in our work with civil society organisations.

In addition, DO produces various types of reports that are important to us and other stakeholders in our efforts to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities. We also produce various types of support materials such as digital guides, online training tools, checklists and fact sheets that can be found on our website.



## **DO's international work**

DO participates in international networks and collaborates with various institutions. This enables us to contribute to the international development of efforts to combat discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities. Through the knowledge we gain from our international work, we can also develop our own working methods.

We monitor international developments within our areas of responsibility and work towards a stronger protection against discrimination within the EU. DO is part of the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet). The network consists of 49 equality bodies in 36 European countries that work in various ways to combat discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities within Europe.

## The Discrimination Act is our primary tool

The Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination that is associated with any of the seven grounds of discrimination: sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.

The prohibition encompasses six forms of discrimination.

The different forms are

- direct discrimination
- indirect discrimination
- inadequate accessibility
- harassment
- sexual harassment
- instructions to discriminate.

The protection against discrimination applies in school, working life and a number of other areas of society. For example, the act applies when you make purchases in a shop, look for accommodation or when you visit your doctor.

The Discrimination Act also contains obligations for employers and education providers to work with “active measures” in order to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities.

Would you like to know more about what the Discrimination Act entails and get specific examples of situations that are encompassed by the protection against discrimination? Visit our website: [do.se](https://do.se).

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