Development of equality and diversity in municipal fire brigades

The MSB is pushing forward and supporting municipalities in their efforts to increase the number of women in local fire brigades, as well as the number of individuals of a non-Nordic ethnicity. Currently only a couple of percent of Swedish firefighters are women, and even fewer are of non-Nordic ethnicity.

There is interest in and an increased need among municipal fire brigades to increase the number of female and non-Nordic firefighters so that equality can be reached in the long-term, and so that there can be an increase in ethnic diversity. The MSB has therefore drawn up a five-year action plan to increase equality and diversity in the fire service.

Here are some examples of measures in the action plan:

- A study which aims to draw up recommended limits for the physical employment requirements for the fire service.
- Regional developers in the fire service that push development forward in their areas.
- A PR campaign to increase interest in the job and to influence public opinion about who can become a firefighter.
- Creation of the good example of a fire station for everyone, where there is a gender balance and obvious ethnic diversity.
- Financial support for fire brigades that arrange activities which aim to increase interest in the work of a firefighter among under represented social groups.

The MSB also supports development of equality and diversity in municipal fire brigades by financing research in this field.

The MSB works with the entire emergency cycle, in other words, before, during and after the occurrence of emergencies, crises and disasters, which provides good opportunities to adopt a holistic perspective and to gain experience from incidents. Regardless of whether it is one person that is affected, for example, in an accident in the home, or if it is a serious emergency that could have consequences for the entire country or even other countries as well.

The objective of the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency (MSB) is to strengthen society’s ability to prevent and handle accidents and severe peacetime emergencies. Society can learn from past experience by evaluation and follow-up in a continuous process where experience is being used to organise and develop tasks for the actors in the civil emergency planning system. Evaluation and learning from accidents and disasters, supervision and monitoring, need for new research and support for civil emergency planning activities are important tasks in order to strengthen societal security and to support prevention, preparedness, response and recovery throughout the disaster management cycle.