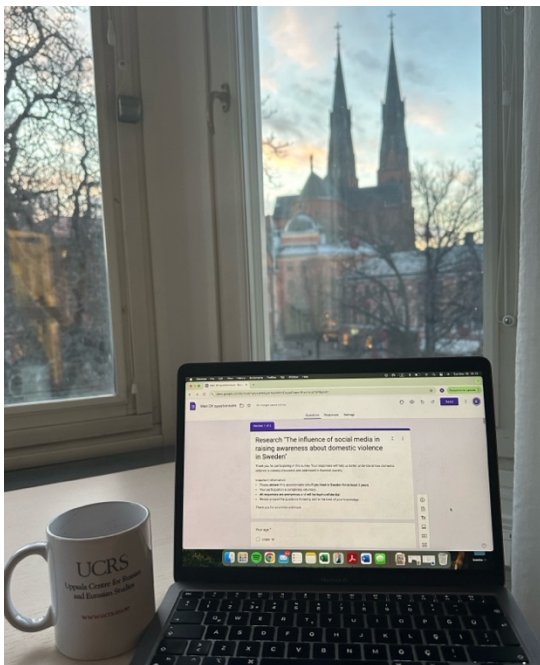


# The role of social media in raising awareness about domestic violence in Sweden

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My stay in Sweden was to research how social media as a tool is used in Sweden to talk about such a sensitive topic as domestic violence. This topic is of a particular interest to me because Russia is having hundreds of high-profile cases of domestic violence each year and media is being censored more and more towards family-oriented policies and due to this social media platform are used by the public to gather news and have conversations. So, I was intrigued how social media platforms are used in Sweden in particular to discuss domestic violence.

The trip started from an invitation to an informal meeting organized by Örjan and Benedicte Berner, where I met with ambassadors, journalists and professors who were incredibly nice to discuss with me the topic of my research and give me advice on which organisations I should contact or in general gave me valuable insights on how they see the problem of domestic violence in Sweden. And since most of the people worked or are still working on researching Russia, I had an opportunity to discuss the situation with domestic violence in Russia as well.



The place where I spent most of my time is Uppsala, a small city with a long history and the oldest university in Sweden. IRES (Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies) agreed to host me and provide me with a room to conduct my research in. All the staff was incredibly nice with sharing their experience and helping me to figure out ways to promote my questionnaire. I was also given a student access to the Uppsala University's library with thousands of books and research papers.

Apart from conducting my research, every Tuesday IRES hosts various researchers from around the Europe who talk about their unpublished or newly published research and share a great deal of information. Some of the researchers I got to listen to: Evert van der Zweerde (the Netherlands), Tatiana Cojocari (Moldova), Alicja Curanovic (Poland). This was an eye-opening experience to listen to different viewpoints on different topics, discuss methods of research and observe healthy discussions of researchers.

I came to Sweden in a perfect time to research domestic violence since both November and December were full of events which topic is ending violence against women. During *16 days*

### *of activism against gender-based violence*

(November 25-December 10) I was lucky to observe the participation of Swedish people not only online through posts but also outside on the streets where people organised peaceful demonstrations and initiated meetings to talk about the problem of violence to find ways to eradicate it.

One of such meetings was organized in Stockholm in a woman-owned shop “Green little hearts” where people not only got the chance to meet but also got an opportunity to listen to a speech of Parul Sharma, a President of UN Women Sweden, and Ulrika Grandin, a Secretary General of UN Women Sweden. It was a huge honour to listen to their talks about their work in the field of violence against women and girls and then talk to them privately.



I attended *Orange Day* organized by UN Women Uppsala, an event where UN Women Uppsala volunteers engaged the public into raising awareness about gender-based violence and promoting gender equality. It was an eye-opening experience that allowed me to engage directly with the public, I spent the day talking to young students interested in the topic and professionals who shared their experience related to the topics of violence in Sweden as well as in other countries. The event was a great opportunity for me to gather insights into the Swedish public’s attitudes towards social issues face-to-face.



I also met with the workers of Uppsala Kvinnojour Dylan and Annika, who were very nice to walk me through the women shelter and show me how the place is organized and where women in need of protection spend their time. During this meeting I also conducted an interview with them and asked all the question that I wanted to get an insider view on the situation with the domestic violence in Sweden. Annika answered the questions about the gender-based abuse and talked about her experience with the victims, while Dylan answered my questions concerning social media and her experience with the public’s reaction to domestic violence online.

Most of my free time I spent in Uppsala where I met a lot of new friends from various countries and with whom we organized evenings where we cooked dishes from our cuisine and watched films or played games. I also frequently visited Stockholm sometimes just to enjoy the atmosphere of a peaceful city, and sometimes to visit the variety of museums it offers to visit. The most memorable was the Nobel week lights with many locations full of installations for people to enjoy.

Nobel week lights  
at Gamla Stan



Nordic museum



Sunset



Of course, it is impossible to not mention the Saint Lucy's day and Christmas in Sweden. It was amazing to see the whole city being decorated with various light installations on different Christmas topics around Uppsala (especially it was nice since the streets in winter turned out not as dark and lifeless). And it was very emotional to see the public follow the old traditions and go to church with their whole families. Christmas in the IRES university was also very memorable since a special Christmas Trivia was prepared for all the staff and we had a lot of fun trying to compete and answer all the tricky questions and even prepare our own carols!

The time I spent in Sweden doing my research was unforgettable and I will always be grateful to Disa and all the Sverker Astrom foundation board for giving me this opportunity. I managed to not only learn a great deal about how women are protected in Sweden from domestic abuse and explored the new country, but also it was an amazing chance to discover myself and my limits when it comes to talking to new people from different cultures and working in an absolutely new environment. The lessons that I learnt during my time in Sweden I will carry through my life and treasure greatly.

As I said in my motivation letter, opportunities like this restore my faith in International Relations and I truly believe that what Sverker Astrom foundation board is doing is incredibly important and I hope that after many years Russian students will still have this opportunity and will be able to experience the same things all the Sverker Astrom scholars did.