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Finland's next government will make
people work longer

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due to lack of resources"

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agreements?

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Theme: Gender Equality in the Nordic region -vision or reality?



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Editorial: Vision or reality?

Will Danes vote for a female prime minister in the coming election? In real life? That would be the first time.

COMMENTS

07.03.2011

TEXT: BERIT KVAM

People in the Nordic countries have been enjoying the Danish political TV drama *Borgen* lately. Actress Sidse Babbett Knudsen's main role as Denmark's Prime Minister is performed with bravura. By November Danes will go to the polls in real general elections, and they could for the very first time elect a real female prime minister.

The Finnish go to the polls in April. In the Portrait the Finnish Minister of Social Affairs Juha Rehula takes stock ahead of those general elections. A central question in the debate will be Finland's forthcoming generation shift. In News you can read that 'Finland's next government will make people work longer'. Can Prime Minister Mari Kiviniemi keep her chair?

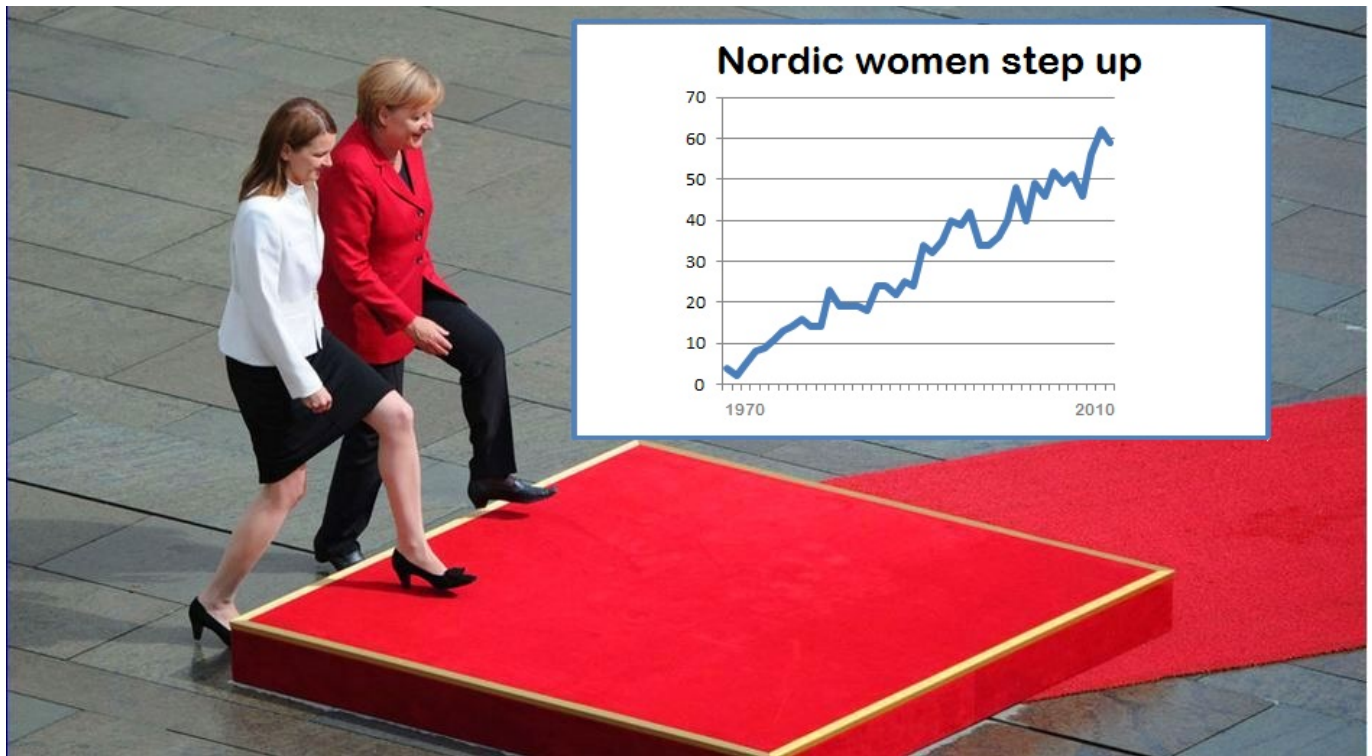
Denmark and Sweden are the only Nordic countries that never had a female prime minister. This month's Focus 'Gender equality in the Nordic region - vision or reality?' features Nordic Labour Journal's own count of how many women have held government posts and other public positions of power in the Nordic countries over the past 40 years. The results indicate a stagnation of women's progress in society. It is also interesting to note that each country has its own male bastion which women have not been able to penetrate. Finns don't want female union leaders. Norway does not want a female foreign minister. After the crisis Iceland's women have strengthened their position, but most positions of power are still held by men. Does this mean something?

The Nordic countries are world champions when it comes to gender equality. Even though there is considerable variation between the countries, women enjoy high employment levels, generous maternal leave, offers of paternal leave, good nursery and care home cover and women make up more than half of all graduates in higher education. So why aren't more women in powerful positions? The labour market is still divided along gender lines. Women tend to work more often in part-time low wage jobs. The leader of the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union, Annelie Nordström, says in 'Part-time is a result of lacking equality' that her union has campaigned for the right to full-time work for 30 years without success. Den-

mark too is looking for a change of tack in the debate on gender equality.

Sigtona Halrynjo shows through her research that the question of gender equality is more complicated than what legislation and rules allow for. Even when a highly educated woman with a highly educated partner works more and shares family work more equally with her partner than other women do, there is still some way to go before she can enjoy full gender equality in her career and in her share of home and care responsibilities, she writes.

Vision or reality? Perhaps the vision of gender equality is more beautiful than real life, not only in the Danish drama, but also when it comes to 'Gender equality in the Nordic region.'



Finland's Prime Minister Mari Kiviniemi represents the highest scoring Nordic country in NLJ'S power barometer. All together women in the Nordic countries have scored 62 out of 100 possible points.

The Nordic region: approaching equality step by step

Nordic women have been an inspiration for the fight for gender equality in other countries. Between them they have filled all but two of the positions of political power: no Nordic country has as yet had a female arch bishop or a female commander-in-chief. Meanwhile both the President and Prime Minister in Finland are women.

THEME

07.03.2011

TEXT AND GRAPHICS: BJÖRN LINDAHL

Mari Kiviniemi recently visited German Chancellor Angela Merkel while the debate on quotas for women in boardrooms was raging. Norway was the first country to introduce quotas in 2008, but women there have also lost more positions of power than in any other country in recent years. Nordic Labour Journal takes a closer look at just how successful the fight for gender equality has been in the Nordic region.

The Nordic countries usually come out top of the world in international surveys of gender equality. Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland have occupied the four top spots in the World Economic Forums Gender Gap Report ever since it was first published five years ago. Only New Zealand and Ireland break the Nordic trend and push Denmark down to seventh place.

Nordic gender equality was also top of the agenda when the UK invited Nordic and Baltic prime ministers to a meeting in London on 19 and 20 January.

Many ways of measuring

There are many ways of measuring gender equality. You could look at whether women are discriminated against in legislation or you could look at salary gaps. You could count the number of women in boardrooms or the percentage of female members of parliament. It is very difficult to include all aspects. Finland's previous Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen hit the headlines in 2007 when he appointed the world's most female dominated government. 60 percent were women - 12 women and eight men.

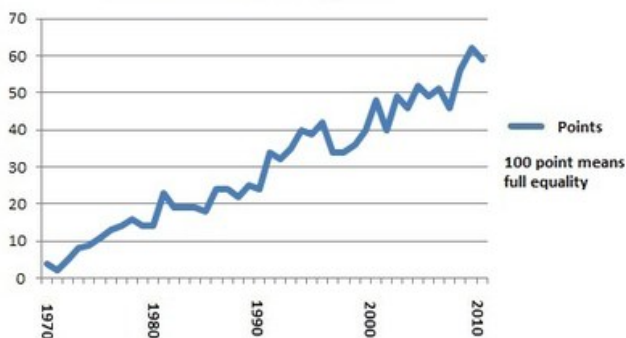
Yet men kept the key positions even in Vanhanen's government. The Prime Minister, Finance Minister, Foreign Minister and the Minister for Industry were all men.

Where does power lie?

It is in other words not enough with a head count to establish how equally power is distributed between the sexes. Some heads are more important than others because it is they who make the most important decisions. Others are important of symbolic reasons - heads of state, arch bishops and police commissioners. In the Nordic region trade unions and employers' organisations also enjoy a very strong position.

Nordic Labour Journal has looked at which positions of power women have managed to take within the public sector since 1970. We have chosen the minister posts which have proved the most stable and which have carried the most power. We have examined working life organisations and six positions of power of great symbolic value.

The Nordic Region



We have granted 40 points to each country, 200 points in all. If Nordic women have reached 100 points it means they have achieved equality with men in our power barometer.

The post of prime minister gets the most points with five. The leader of the Confederation of Trade Unions gets four points while we have given four points to the employers' organisation

which allows two points to the chairperson and two to the managing director.

Still some way to go

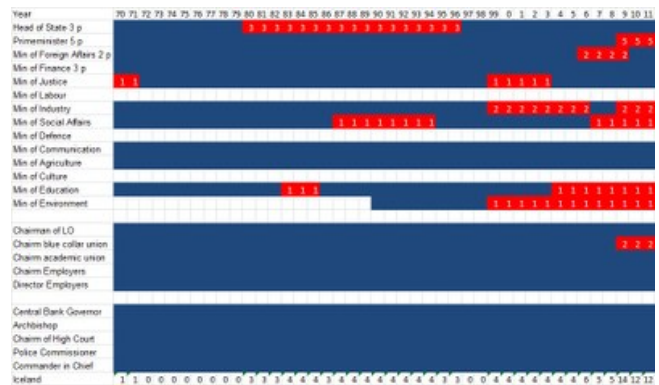
The result shows Nordic women still have some way to go. Their top score is 62 points.

Finland's women have come the furthest with their 15 points, when 20 means full equality with men. The country has both a female president, Tarja Halonen, and a female prime minister, Mari Kiviniemi.

It is hard to get an overview of the development with five countries, 23 positions of power and a 40 year time scale.

Graphics for the past 40 years

We have therefore chosen to present a graphic comparison where we highlight which year saw a female leader in a particular position. We have been generous and accepted one month of service to qualify for a full 'female' year.



We have taken inspiration from the countries' flags, so the Icelandic graphics is marked with red for years which have seen women in positions of power and white marks the number of points that position has. For a larger version of this graphic go to the story on Iceland and click on the graphic. You can access data for the other countries by clicking on the headlines on the right or at the bottom of this page.

Minister of Social Affairs, yes - but not arch bishop

The graphics show how slow the development has really been and how few women have filled positions of power in working life and other positions of great symbolic significance like central bank governors, police commissioners and supreme court presidents.

Once a position of power has been filled by a woman, it is easier filled again by another woman. 111 of the female points achieved over the past 41 years come from the female dominance of the position as minister of social affairs. Second comes the position as minister of justice with 87 points and minister of education comes third with 61 points.

Far from the full story

Nordic Labour Journal's power barometer should not be taken for more than what it is - an attempt to illustrate the results of the fight for gender equality. There are weaknesses to the system, like the fact that a large number of Denmark's points stem from the fact that Queen Margrethe has been on the throne since 1972. Yet all the three monarchies have changed to introduce gender equality for succession - so here too we're talking about political decisions.

Iceland is in a special situation because the country has no defence forces. So we have looked at who has been head of the coast guard and given an extra point to the minister of industry and energy to compensate for the country's lack of a minister for employment.



Click on the grid for a larger format! White marks the number of years a woman has held a position of power. Prime minister gives the highest number of points - five.

Denmark still waits for a female prime minister

Few countries have been so mentally prepared for a female prime minister as Denmark. The political TV drama *Borgen* has been a great success, also in neighbouring countries. It portrays a female prime minister and the power struggle at Christiansborg, the Copenhagen palace which houses parliament, the Prime Minister's office and the supreme court.

THEME

07.03.2011

TEXT AND GRAPHICS: BJÖRN LINDAHL, PHOTO: DR

Author Hanne-Vibeke Holst's trilogy *the Crown Princess*, *the Regicide* and *The Queen Sacrifice* also examines how hard it can be for women to reach political positions of power. This is not only fiction, as two female party leaders recently discovered. Bodil Kornbek became party leader for the Christian Democrats after the party lost all its parliamentary seats

in 2005. They then lost half of their voters in the 2007 elections. She was forced to leave after a trying internal fight.

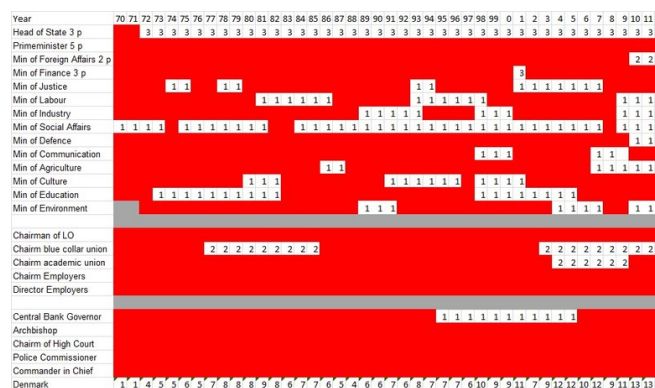
Lene Espersen became leader for the Conservative People's Party in 2008 and Denmark's first female foreign minister in February 2010. One month later she became the centre of a storm of criticism when she went on a family holiday

"Lene Epsersen didn't use her years in top politics to build alliances. Her networks are weak. Not a single person from the conservative organisation or trustees came to her defence when the criticism started mounting," commented the tabloid Ekstrabladet.

"Gender quotas for company boards are regularly debated in Denmark, but gets only limited support and politically the issue is not on the agenda - and will probably not be as long as there is a centre-right government," says the researchers in the Denmark chapter of 'Gender and Power in the Nordic region'.

Denmark has still not had a female president of the Confederation of Trade Unions, but Bodil Nyboe Andersen made history in 1995 as one of the world's first female central bank governors - and the only one who went to work on a push-bike.

Pia Kjaersgaard from the Danish People's Party is Denmark's longest serving female parliamentarian. She has been a member for more than 27 years. The longest serving woman in a position of power by far is Queen Margrethe who has been Danish head of state for more than 40 years.



WWW.ARBEIDSLIVINORDEN.ORG



Click on the grid for a larger format! Light blue marks the number of years a woman has held a position of power. Prime minister gives the highest number of points - five.

Finnish women have conquered the most important positions of power

Finnish women top the Nordic Labour Journal power barometer with 15 out of a possible 40 points. Not least because both their president and prime minister are women.

THEME

07.03.2011

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL, PHOTO MATTIAS AHLN/SVERIGES RADIO

There's a small sting in the tail though; Finland's first female prime minister had to resign because of a political scandal, and the present one got her job because of somebody else.

The Centre Party's Anneli Jäätteenmäki became Finland's first female prime minister in spring 2003. During electioneering she had made use of secret documents detailing Finland's relationship with the USA and the Iraq war. When it emerged she had lied about how she had obtained these documents she was forced to resign, after only 68 days in power.

Matti Vanhanen took over and formed his second government since the 2007 elections, one which beat all records for the number of female ministers - eight in twelve were women, or 60 percent. But even Vanhanen faced a political scandal, this time over the financing of the Centre Party election campaign. When he then proposed to rise the retirement age from 63 to 65 the trade unions turned against him. He stepped down on 22 June 2010 and Mari Kiviniemi took over. Finland's President Tarja Halonen is not burdened by any political scandals and has become a symbol of stability in



Click on the table for a larger format! Red marks the number of years a woman has held a position of power. Prime minister gives the highest number of points - five.

Iceland: the crisis brought a female breakthrough

The financial crisis hit Iceland harder than any other Nordic country, and it also led to a political earthquake. Wide-spread corruption and nepotism made voters look for new politicians. This has benefited women.

THEME

07.03.2011

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL, PHOTO: ANE CECILIE BLICHFELDT/NORDEN.ORG

A financial bubble of gigantic proportions grew in Iceland between 2003 and 2008. All stocks on Iceland's stock exchange grew nine-fold and the three largest banks saw capital growth nine times the size of the country's entire GDP as they offered high savings interest to foreign customers.

The three largest banks collapsed in early 2008. The Icelandic crisis was so massive that the country needed help from the International Monetary Fund. The UK and the Netherlands are negotiating compensation from the Icelandic state to cover the losses of those who invested their savings in the Icelandic banks. The so-called Icesave agree-

ment has been passed by Iceland's parliament, the Althing, but President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson has demanded a referendum on the issue. This will be held on 9 April. The proposal is supported by 57.7 percent and 60 percent of the Icelandic people in two opinion polls.

Political dissatisfaction

The fact that regular Icelanders were left with the bill caused by a small group of financial speculators resulted in 71 percent of the population deciding Icelandic politics were corrupt in May 2009. In a January poll only 52.5 percent of people wanted to say who they'd vote for, with 22 percent saying they would cast blank votes.

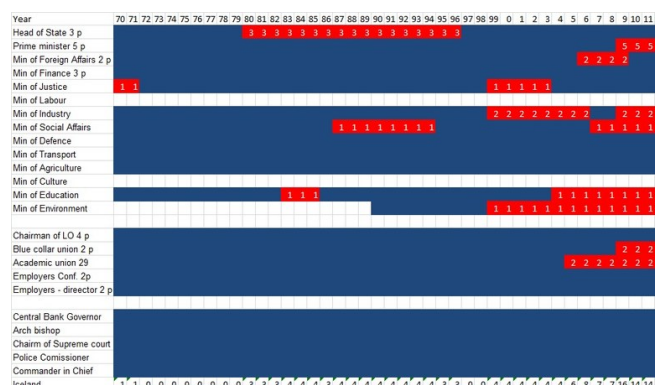
After long and noisy demonstrations, the government responsible during the crisis stepped down in February 2009. Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir came in as the country's first ever female prime minister. Half of her government ministers were women. After the election in April that year she formed her second government with 42 percent female ministers.

The crisis also led to women taking the helm at Iceland's three largest banks. Two of them remain today.

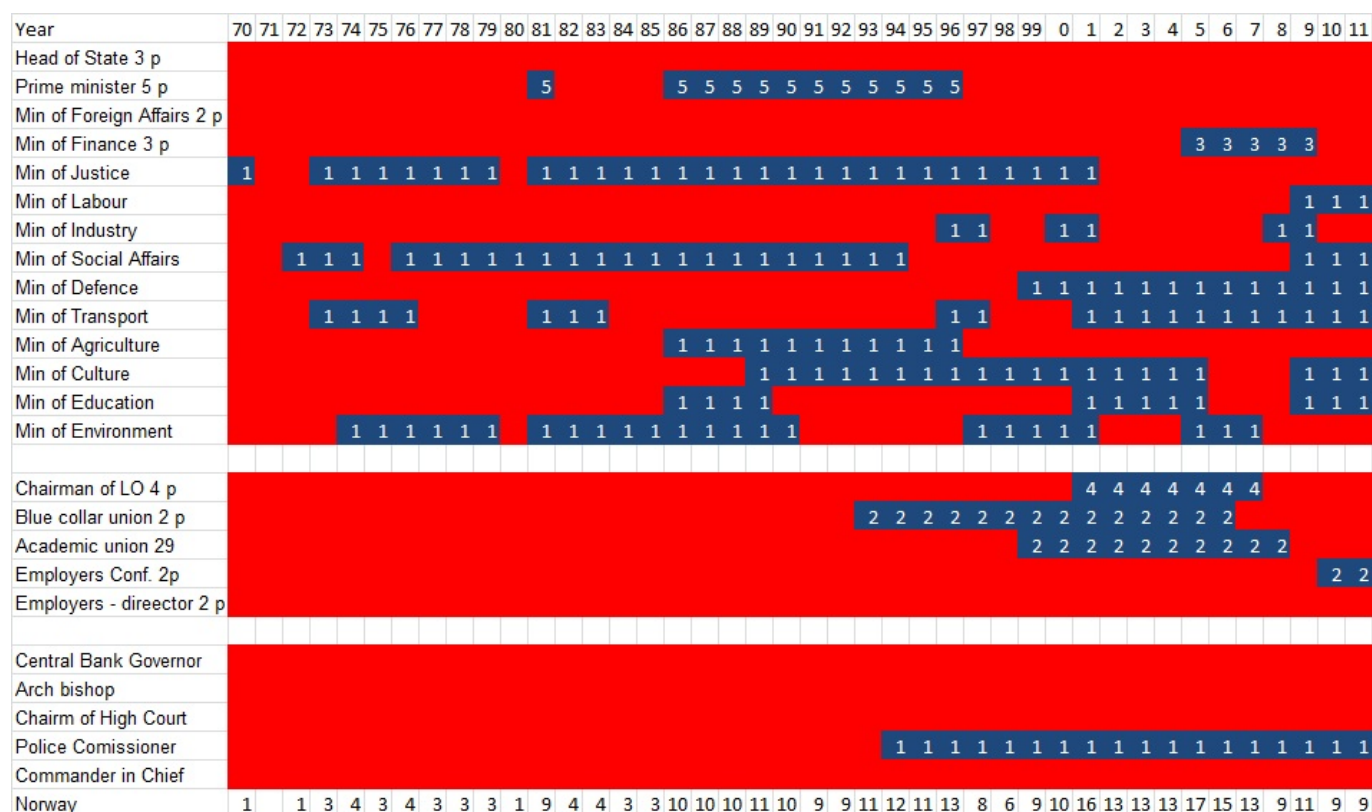
Women's list

Before the crisis hit there had been little progress in the work to improve gender equality in Iceland. The country didn't get its first female government minister, Auður Auðuns, until 1971. Female representation in the Althing was below five percent until 1983. Then someone presented a separate women's list in elections from 1983 until 1999. It helped increase the female representation to 35 percent. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir's presidency from 1980 until 1996 was also of great symbolic importance.

After the 2009 elections the Althing had 43 percent female members. That was the highest percentage in the world after Rwanda, Sweden and Cuba.



The Icelandic women were slow starters, but the crisis 2008 brought a real change in the gender equality at the top positions.



Click on the graph for a larger format! Blue marks the number of years a woman has held a position of power. Prime minister gives the highest number of points - five.

Norwegian women have lost the most power

Norway has been the hottest country in the gender equality debate since quotas were made law there in 2008. Publicly listed firms, often major listed companies, must have at least 40 percent of each sex in their boardrooms. Yet at the same time women have lost more positions of power in Norway than in any other Nordic country.

THEME

07.03.2011

TEXT AND GRAPHICS: BJÖRN LINDAHL

Until four years ago, Gerd-Liv Valla was the leader of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions. She stepped down on 9 March 2007, the day after the International Women's Day, after being accused by one of her own employees for using master suppression techniques. Valla led Norway's largest union for six years, and during that same period of time Randi Bjørgen led the largest vocational union, The Confederation of Vocational Unions (YS), and academics were led by two women - Aud Blankholm for the largest academics' union AF (which no longer exists) and Christl Kvam

for The Federation of Norwegian Professional Associations. Today all three unions are led by men.

At the same time Kristin Halvorsen stepped down from her post as finance minister after the 2009 elections, and chose to become Minister of Education. She needed more time to lead her party, the Socialist Left, than her job as finance minister allowed her. This combined with a few other government reshuffles saw the number of women in positions of power greatly reduced.

It seems like a long time since Gro Harlem Brundtland's 1986 'women's government' which was made up of 44 per cent women - a world record at the time.

The most powerful woman in Norway today is probably the Minister of Labour, Hanne Bjurstrøm, with responsibility for a third of Norway's budget.

Two of the three party leaders in the governing coalition are women, so the weakening of female positions does not register much in the media. In 2010 Norway also got its first female leader of the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO), Kristen Skogen Lund.

The quota law which came into effect on 1 January 2008 was followed with great interest not only in Norway but in many other countries. In the end all publicly listed companies managed to fill their female boardroom quota. State owned companies had to adhere to a quota as early as 2006. From 2011 the legislation will also apply for all companies that are more than two-thirds owned by municipalities.

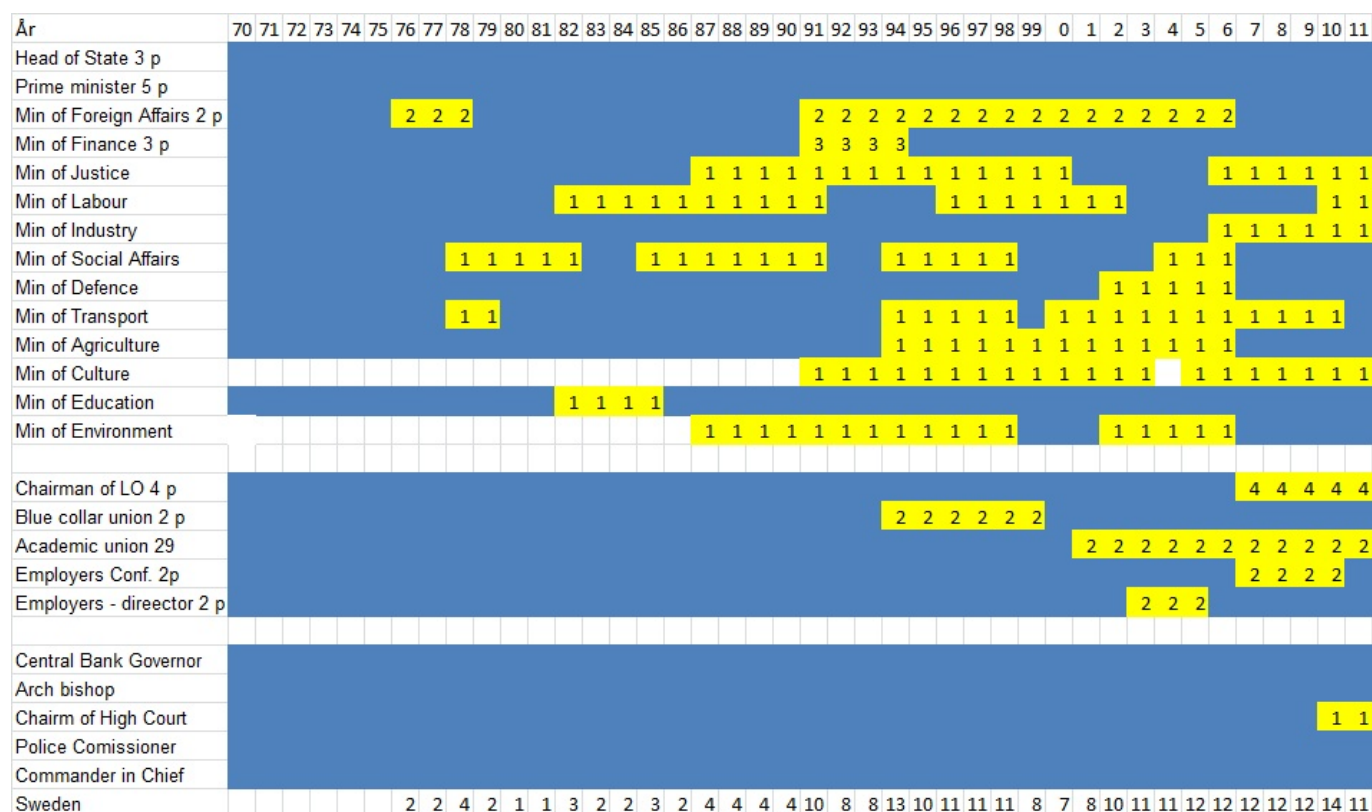
All this makes Norway a clear leader in this area in the Nordic region. The number of women on the boards of public companies increased from nine to 36 percent in five years. It is short of 40 percent because that threshold only applies to companies with ten or more board members. A three-person board only needs for both sexes to be represented, which means 33 percent.

Marit Hoel from the Center for Corporate Diversity has followed the development over the past years. She has these figures for Nordic companies in 2010 for comparison:

Country	Number of board members	Of whom are women	Proportion
Norway	732	229	31.3%
Sweden	1550	339	21.9%
Finland	678	114	16.8%
Denmark	893	109	12.5%

These figures include not only the core company but all companies in a group.

There is hardly any research on women and gender in Icelandic public companies. Yet according to Statistics Norway women made up 13 percent of board members in major Icelandic companies in 2008, compared to 8 percent in 2007.



Click on the grid for a larger format! Yellow marks the number of years a woman has held a position of power. Prime minister gives the highest number of points - five.

Who'll replace Sweden's powerful women?

Sweden is the only Nordic country which has never had a female prime minister or a female head of state in modern times. The Social Democrat Party leader Mona Sahlin could have become prime minister in the September 2010 elections, but her new red-green coalition lost.

THEME

07.03.2011

TEXT AND GRAPHICS: BJÖRN LINDAHL

Some months after losing the election Mona Sahlin said she would step down as party leader after an extraordinary party congress on 25-27 March this year.

The hottest candidates to follow her are all men, and when the leader of Sweden's Confederation of Trade Unions, Wanjia Lundby-Wedin, also retires in 2012, Sweden's women risk losing their two main positions of power to men.

The battle for gender equality in Sweden has historically been fought within women's own institutions, according to the

Nordic Council of Ministers survey 'Gender and power in the Nordic Region'.

Women's organisations play a central role

Like in Finland, Sweden's women's organisations have played a greater political role than in the other Nordic countries. Sweden's industry structure with many large companies has also meant they have enjoyed more power than Norwegian companies, which traditionally have been dominated by state ownership.

Four of Sweden's political parties have their own women's organisations and 2005 saw the birth of a women's party - Feminist Initiative. It only took 0.4 percent of votes in the 2010 parliamentary elections, but in January this year Gudrun Schyman became party leader. She is one of Sweden's most high-profile politicians and was leader for the Left Party from 1993 to 2003.

Three of Sweden's largest political parties have still never had a female leader - the Moderates, the Christian Democrats and the Sweden Democrats, who did not enter parliament until 2010.

Yet you get a measure of how fast things have changed if you compare today's governments with Olof Palme's 1973 government. Until then Sweden had only had five female government ministers. Olof Palme appointed three female ministers and 17 men. But all three women, Gertrud Sigurdson, Anna-Greta Leijon and Lena Hjelm-Wallén, were appointed to serve on consultative councils, which meant they were not heads of their own departments.

The first gender equal government

Ingvar Carlsson became the first prime minister to appoint a government with 50 percent women during his third term between October 1994 to March 1994. Eleven out of 22 government ministers were women.

Sweden has also seen a very fierce debate on boardroom quotas for women. But it has been more theoretical, and unlike the Norwegian debate it has centred on the state's right to intervene and limit listed companies' right to appoint their own boards.

Wanted quotas but stepped down

Sweden's previous Minister of Labour, Sven Otto Littorin, last July said he wanted to introduce female boardroom quotas because it was taking too long to achieve gender equality there.

"The way things are going we'll be waiting for 150 years," said Sven Otto Littorin.

But he hadn't cleared his comments with the rest of his four-party coalition government. His resignation two days later meant his move did not have the same effect as in Norway, where a male government minister, Ansgar Gabrielsen, finally got the proposal through parliament. This shows it is not always women who achieve results in gender equality politics, although the Norwegian quota idea had been worked on for many years by several female ministers before Gabrielsen pushed it through.

New tack sought in Danish equality debate

Norway uses quotas and a men's panel to improve gender equality, but in Denmark there is disagreement on how to do it. Yet the Danes do agree there's a need for a gender equality debate which focuses on both sexes.

THEME

07.03.2011

BY MARIE PREISLER



When Denmark's right of centre minister for gender equality, Lykke Friis, used a newspaper interview to suggest the inclusion of men in the celebration of International Women's Day there was a lot of shrugging of shoulders and little applause.

8 March should be turned into a day to fight for equal opportunities for all, the minister said, who went on to announce she wanted to establish a men's panel like the one pioneered by Norway. Her goal is to revive the gender equality debate. The minister for gender equality says we now have nothing but women debating women with other women. There's been a mixed response to her comments from gender researchers and feminists.



"Gender researchers and activists alike have pointed out the dangers of muddling up the image of inequalities. You could be doing just that if the women's day turns into a day mixing up women and men's privileges and you end up with focus on everything and everybody," says Michala Hvidt Breengaard, a research assistant at the Coordination for Gender Research at the University of Copenhagen's Department of Sociology.

The minister is also wrong in claiming men aren't part of the equality debate, says Mette Bom, a columnist and author of several books on women's situation and everyday feminism.

"This is a myth. In my experience many men are already active and serious participants in the debate."

The need for a debate on values

She can think of many reasons why the focus should stay on women's equality.



"It's necessary as long as there is still a marked difference in what women and men earn during their lifetimes. Men's violence toward women also remains a major problem. And we lack a debate on the sacrifices women must make," says Mette Bom.

She feels feminists in their eagerness to get women into careers and promotions seem to forget to talk about how women achieve balance and piece. She knows many women who have failed at combining a turbo speed working life with a clear focus on family life:

"Many hit the wall with stress and are forced to take three years off at home to get back on track. And that of course is the opposite extreme which does not benefit equality at all."

Mette Bom feels the equality debate is full of fruitless confrontations between the right-of-centre feminists who talk about freedom of choice, while the left-of-centre feminists want tools like legislation and quotas to help get more women into top jobs. The parties should rather meet and discuss the modern woman's values, she thinks. She is a supporter of the quota system.

Quotas or no quotas

The Danish government opposes legislation to impose quotas to boost female representation in limited companies, like Norway has done. The minister for equality has repeatedly used Norway as an example of what that could lead to; 30 percent of Norwegian limited companies chose to change into limited liability companies (Ltd.) to escape the quota demand.

"Norway is a great example of what not to do. The solution is to show trust in companies," said Lykke Friis when launching the campaign 'Operation Chain Reaction - Recommendations for more women on supervisory boards'.

The campaign has seen a total of 31 larger Danish companies signing up to working actively yet voluntarily toward a strengthening of diversity in boardrooms. Today only 10.4 percent of board members in Danish limited companies are women. That number falls to 5.6 percent if you take away the boards' employee representatives. Only 5.4 percent of private sector leaders are women.

Paternal leave rules work

Few Danish equality researchers believe equality can be achieved through voluntary measures. Michala Hvidt Breen-gaard points to Sweden's maternity rules as an efficient tool to achieve greater gender equality:

"We've heard the minister's arguments for voluntary regulation for many years but seen very few results. In Sweden they've realised attitudes can be changed through legislation and political action. One thing which clearly has led to a more positive attitude to paternal leave has been to earmark a period of leave for men - and attitudes have changed among individual men and women as well as on the labour market."

If the next parliamentary election leads to a change of government, Denmark's limited companies must have 40 percent women on their boards from 2015. The Social Democrats and the Socialist People's Party (SF) presented an equality proposal in January which they'll turn into a bill if they get into power. The two parties also want to earmark 12 weeks parental leave for fathers, companies must narrow the salary gap between the sexes, buying sex would be banned and Denmark would have its own men's commission to investigate why more and more boys drop out of school and why men more than women end up being losers.

Weak boys

The weak boys and men represent a serious problem which is often ignored in the equality debate, thinks Martin D. Munk, professor and leader of Aalborg University's Center for Mobility Research.



"It is a great thing to discuss how to get more women into board rooms, but we mustn't forget that men are the weaker sex in some areas. There are more boys who fail to achieve, who lead an unhealthy lifestyle and men live shorter lives than women. There are vulnerable girls we need to look after too, but studies show that boys more than girls are social losers," says Martin D. Munk.

Girls also clearly beat boys in higher education. Female students are in the majority in long-term higher educations - not only in Denmark but in most Western countries.

But that does not mean women automatically achieve equality when it comes to securing top jobs, says Karen Sjørup, senior lecturer and equality researcher at the Department of Society and Globalisation at Roskilde University:

"Women still hit an invisible glass ceiling. It's higher up than it used to be, but it's there."

She says one example is women in top political jobs who often are given soft policy areas like social politics, while their male colleagues head for finance and foreign ministry jobs. And while there might be more female than male priests, women are underrepresented as deans or bishops - the church's leading posts.

The high number of involuntary part-timers is a result of how we value women's work, says Annelie Nordström, chairwoman at Kommunal, the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union. The union has been fighting for the right to full-time employment for 30 years. It's been an uphill battle, and since the economic crisis hit in 2009 it's been even harder.

TEXT: GUNHILD WALLIN

There's no stopping her when she starts talking about the right to full-time work and what this means for gender equality. This is what she burns for and she rates it one of the most important issues when it comes to women's rights. Part-time

20

Women's work valued less



"The high number of women working part-time is a result of the reduced value employers put on women's work. And many men want to keep women at home so they can take the main responsibility for the family's need. This means part-time work is a direct result of a lack of equality in the home," says Annelie Nordström.

Some sectors use part-time work more than others, voluntary or involuntary. In Sweden, just like in the rest of Europe, these are schooling, elderly care and handicap care. Around half of Kommunal's more than 500,000 members work part-time. One in four of these are so-called involuntary part-time workers. The rest seem to choose to work part-time, although Annelie Nordström doubts this is the case. Sweden's unemployment insurance funds allow part-time workers to take out unemployment benefits for 75 days before they have to decide whether to take 100 percent unemployment or not take any benefit at all. This means those who want to increase their hours get lost in the statistics.

It is also important to understand, she says, that this is not only about pure half or three quarter-time workers. Part-time these days can mean many things. Employers calculate the number of hours they need to fill, and this can result in some odd working hour percentages.

"Nowadays split shifts are becoming more common, which means you go in to work a few hours in the morning and then return to work more hours in the evening. This creates major problems. Family life suffers, but it also means women work when the pressure is greatest. As a result, many cannot face going full-time," says Annelie Nordström.

Good local examples

The Kommunal union has approached the problem in many different ways over the past 30 years. Demands for legislation have led nowhere and the right to full-time work has been pushed repeatedly during many years of wage negotiations but the answer remains no. The union has presented reports which show how more full-time jobs are beneficial to society, despite what employers often think.

The union has offered to help see through the transformation of jobs from part-time to full-time. Politicians on a national level have hesitated to legislate or create binding agreements. Now there is a drive to get politicians to push through an agreement on the right to full-time employment in public sector agencies. The latest wage negotiation also resulted in a working group which will study local solutions to working hours in cooperation with Sweden's municipalities and county councils.

"150,000 health workers will have retired by 2030. At the same time young people's interest for health sector college courses is falling dramatically. This is a very negative trend. We must create attractive jobs with good salaries and good working conditions to make it interesting to work within what will be one of the really big labour markets of the future," says Annelie Nordström.

The will and courage to support the right to full-time employment varies locally. Some municipalities have included the right to full-time employment in their working hours agreements, while others have introduced the right to full-time employment within the health and care sectors.

Nynäshamn municipality has long been working to change part-time jobs into full-time ones within the health sector. Municipal section leader Birgitta Alkvist says they have been contacted by many municipalities from elsewhere in Sweden looking for information on how they've managed to turn so many part-time jobs into full-time - a total of nearly 100 health sector posts in four years.

"The right to full-time employment is the greatest equality issue there is. Women need and should have a right to their own income," says Birgitta Alkvist.

The need for good basic staffing

She started working for the right to full-time work when she became leader of the Kommunal union's Nynäshamn chapter in 1995. It's been slow work. Employers have feared it would cost too much and complicate the running of the health sector. But in 2007 one union member had had enough. Together with Birgitta Alkvist she went to see the head of the municipal executive committee and documented how the municipality was spending 45 million Kronor (€5m) on temporary staff.

"That doesn't make sense," he said and immediately started the work to create full-time posts for all.

The municipality drafted in help from Paula Liukkonen, associate professor in business economy and an expert in the economy of staffing. She trained union representatives and examined each workplace's economy to see how to make space for full-time posts.

"You need knowledge and good mathematical skills when you turn part-time jobs into full-time. In order to succeed you need a good level of basic staffing," says Birgitta Alkvist.

The solution was to give all health sector employees so-called 'flow' time, even those originally working full-time. The idea is for workers to do the majority of their work in one location while the rest of the time can be spent in other departments.

There was some opposition in the beginning but now most people seem to find it interesting to see other parts of the sector. Nor has it incurred any extra costs for the municipality - quite the opposite, says Birgitta Alkvist.

Yet social authorities are now cutting costs and that could harm this development. It makes it harder to offer full-time positions to all who want it. Work is becoming more stressful and within elderly care tasks are getting harder because the population is older and sicker than ten years ago. Fewer employees want to jump from one workplace to the other.

"The solution is to reduce the hours of a full-time job. After all it is hard to jump from working on the floor to performing white-collar tasks," says Birgitta Alkvist.

The Hofors model

Hofors was another municipality which was quick to implement full-time rights for all. Sven Fernlund Skagerud was a driving force there, and today he turns part-time jobs into full-time ones for Avesta municipality. His work has also caught the eye of many other municipalities, and he often travels to give talks on the issue. Avesta has managed to change from having 40 percent part-time jobs to having 100 percent full-time jobs.

Their secret is to make use of their own staff rather than temps. Just like in Nynäshamn this work has been dependent on the solidarity between part-time and full-time workers. The full-time workers must accept that part of their jobs become so-called flexible, which means they can be moved to a different workplace for periods of time.



"Some oppose this. Bosses are worried about their budget, unions might not have enough knowledge about this system and full-time employees must change their routines and show solidarity with those who take on more work," says Sven Fernlund Skagerud.

Clear decisions are needed to turn part-time jobs into full-time, he says. Politicians must act very transparently and be very decisive. But if you see this through you emerge with your honour intact. Hofors began work on this back in 2003 and has experienced lower sick leave figures and happier workers who feel they are more in control of their own economy. Part-time is without a doubt a question of gender equality, says Fernlund Skagerud.

"If men had been staffing the home-help service there would be no part-timers there," he says.

Motherhood vs career logic rules

We're all equal now, right? More women than ever get an education, there are new ideals for what it means to be a father and family-friendly solutions have changed the framework for how mothers' and fathers' adapt to work and family life.

RESEARCH

07.03.2011

TEXT: SIGTUNA HALRYNJO

Yet my dissertation 'Mothers and fathers meet the rules of career logic' shows these social changes have not been enough to achieve gender equality in working life or in family life.

The dissertation is based on a survey with 3,924 male and female respondents from three Norwegian top professions, interviews with 42 highly educated women and men, an EU-study including interviews with 102 men and finally a case study from a major Norwegian company. The analyses show that even though highly educated women work more and share family work more evenly with their partner compared to other women, there is still some way to go before gender equality both at work and in the division of labour at home is achieved. Investment in elite education and equally strong preferences for career is not enough to change the skewed work-life balance between the sexes - when parenthood is involved.

The analyses show no differences in career realisation between men and women without children, and nearly nine in ten highly educated women agree that the best situation for a family with small children implies that the mother and father both work the same amount of paid work and share child care and household chores equally. However, the actual traditional gender division of child care negatively affects mother's career. Even among the best educated, fathers can either share child care responsibility equally or it will be taken care of by his partner. Mothers, on the other hand, can either share with her partner or do the job herself. The option of leaving the main responsibility to her partner is still very, very rare for a woman. Thus, mothers and fathers do not have equal conditions for success in 'the career game'.

Family friendly arrangements are introduced in order to make it easier to combine work and family life. However, the dissertation highlights the imbalance between the formal rules, which focus on the importance of finding a good work-life balance, and the 'real rules of the game' which demand that people are able to present themselves as irreplaceable

workers in order for them to have a chance of professional development or promotion.

When it becomes too stressful having to be irreplaceable both at work and at home, the solution for mothers is to change from a career lifestyle to an employee lifestyle. Demands will be lower and life quality will to a larger extent be defined by spare time activities. A change like that means the work-life balance rules become more manageable and family-oriented solutions aren't 'punished'. But such a change also means giving up career paths and opportunities for self-realisation typically associated with high education jobs.

Family-friendly measures can be important to improve employees' work-life balance. But if these measures are being used systematically more by women than men there's also the danger that they will contribute to the traditional work-life division between the sexes. So despite having the same starting point, men and women end up with systematically different work-life solutions: fathers will to a larger extent follow the career logic of continuously investing in their job, and they will be awarded with opportunities to develop and to further their careers. Mothers will to a greater extent take on the main responsibility at home and hope they can put their career on hold, and still 'make it' later on. Fathers' careers are given priority and mothers' careers seem to have to yield.

Faced with the individual competition for working life privileges - which extend to more than job and income safety, like the chance to perform exciting tasks, the chance for advancement and higher salaries - a built-in award system for workers without care responsibilities creates a gender-related paradox in which family-friendly measures could end up working against gender equality and against careers.

The dissertation therefore challenges the traditional policy of adapting working life to family life, and demonstrates how the career logic of workers making themselves irreplaceable will per definition award not being encumbered with care re-

sponsibility. Is it possible to achieve gender equality by introducing more voluntary rights for employees with family responsibilities? As long as prevailing family policies allow for a skewed use of carers' rights, the result could be an imbalance in the opportunities to play the 'career game'. Some argue for a wider definition of what constitutes relevant family policy to include working life conditions. The real challenge, however, is to identify to which extent and in what ways it is possible to regulate working life conditions where career logic rules apply.

Traditionally, paid parental leave and reduced working hours are perceived as implicit benefits which workers collectively can negotiate with their employer. Yet within the career logic, having time to work is an important investment and advantage which helps in the competition for the exciting opportunities among colleagues. Within the 'career game' even paid leave or other family-friendly arrangements can then become a problem which makes it more difficult for mothers to succeed.

It will be interesting for future research to study the possibilities and limitations for regulating career logic rules. We need to know more about how the emergence of an ever increasingly evaluation and performance-based working life influences career logic rules in different professions and work organisations.

In principle you could imagine a situation where all workers who have dependent children and/or older relatives actually do take their share of the care responsibility. In that case the career drawback of being 'burdened' with care responsibility would be considerably smaller.

If gender equality at home and at work is the goal - and both women and men with high education in these studies say it is - the shape and use of measures to improve the work-life balance must not be measured only in terms of reduced perceived stress in the short term. It must also be analysed and understood in light of the (gendered) conditions of care responsibility, dependent on who *has* and who *is* a partner taking the major responsibility at home - and in light of career logic rules, where the aim is to portray yourself as 'irreplaceable'.

Finland's next government will make people work longer

Recent year's attempts to increase Finland's pension age from 63 to 65 have slowly gained momentum. The actual pension age has increased following the 2004 pension reform and now stands just over 60.4 years. The number 65 has turned into a hot political potato.

NEWS

07.03.2011

TEXT: CARL-GUSTAV LINDÉN

While political parties, employers and trade unions tend to agree today's 25 year olds will need to work three years longer than today's pensioners, there is little agreement on how to achieve this goal.

Finns go to the polls in parliamentary elections in April and the new government will inherit what seems to have become an eternal problem. Two years ago the then prime minister Matti Vanhanen came up with an idea which he soon shared with his government colleagues and the parties to the labour market. He wanted to raise the retirement age to 65. This caused an outcry from trade unions and centre-left politicians. Vanhanen had to backtrack.

But the issue hasn't gone away. The beginning of March this year saw the publication of three new reports highlighting ways to get people to enjoy work and stay in employment for longer. But the reports also outlined measures which would make it more difficult to take early retirement. The experts behind the reports identified a need to improve health care within companies. It would be very difficult to legislate for an increased retirement age, they concluded.

An election issue

Over the past few months it has become clear that the government does not want to re-examine the raising of the retirement age in fear of the issue overshadowing the election campaign. Prime Minister Mari Kiviniemi (the Centre Party) has made it quite clear that this will become one of the most challenging topics for whoever will negotiate to form a new government.

Finland has one of Europe's trickiest age structures with an ever decreasing number of breadwinners as large numbers of people enter retirement. The working-age population will shrink by 150,000 people by 2025. Unlike other Nordic countries Finland has not experienced any considerable labour immigration.

The need to reform the Finnish pension system is not a result of the system itself being broken. It is needed to make sure enough people work longer to guarantee the financing of the future welfare system. Work to identify which measures are needed will continue right up to the parliamentary elections. The aim is to include concrete proposals in the next government's policy programme.

Time for transnational collective agreements?

This year workers in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden will be told how many shares they have earned in the French corporation Suez S.A.

NEWS

07.03.2011

TEXT: KERSTIN AHLBERG

This is the result of a collective agreement which applies globally to all employees in the Suez group's companies. Such transnational agreements are becoming increasingly commonplace. But could a worker in Denmark be sure she gets what she is entitled to according to a collective agreement which has been entered into in France?

European trade unions have long argued for the development of transnational collective agreements. When the freedom of movement allows employers to move their business to wherever labour is cheapest, national deals are no longer sufficient. A pan-European collective agreement would prevent employers from playing workers against each other, forcing them to compete and lower their salary demands, the unions argue. They're mainly talking about traditional collective agreements which regulate salaries and terms of employment in different professions.

These ideas have never become reality. One reason is that not all trade unions are comfortable with the idea of relinquishing power over wage negotiations to a European negotiating team. Nordic unions in particular oppose this kind of centralisation, perhaps because of their strong position at home and because their potential influence on a transnational level would be limited.

Yet even if they changed their minds there is another obstacle: There is very little chance employers would give their organisations on a European level a mandate to negotiate on salaries and terms of employment. They've spent decades to decentralise and individualise wage formation. And when unions cannot use industrial action - like they do at home - they have no power to force employers to come to the negotiating table.

A different type of transnational collective agreement is already a reality, however, and has grown considerably in scale since the year 2000. These are agreements within multinational businesses which apply to all employees in Europe, or even globally. But these are not wage agreements.

- The most important part of these agreements centre on how the parties handle business restructuring, with the aim of minimising redundancies. It could be a general agreement or one which covers a particular restructuring process.
- Another important type of agreement covers how to create a common system in order to anticipate and adapt to changes, i.e. by mapping employees' training needs and by offering everybody regular further education.
- The third major category of agreements covers the employers' commitment to make sure all employees in all countries where a company operates enjoy basic rights as defined in various conventions on human rights and in ILO's core conventions.

Agreements which cover ongoing restructuring will sometimes include rules on for instance the size of redundancy packages, or what economic terms should apply when it is necessary to move staff to different jobs.

Yet it is relatively rare that cross-border agreements regulate in detail the rights (or responsibilities) of each individual employee. In this respect the agreement on part ownership for all employees in the French Suez corporation is unusual. Most of these rare examples are to be found in French companies. Companies based in the Nordic countries for some reason seem to mostly enter into agreements on the respect for employees' fundamental rights. Some examples are Danske Bank, Norwegian Aker and Swedish Elanders.

No matter the focus of an agreement, it typically contains rules on how the parties must make sure whatever has been agreed is actually implemented in all the countries where a company operates. It is common to establish a joint monitoring committee which will follow up how the agreement is applied in practice. The committee is also where the parties can try to solve disagreements.

Yet the major question remains - what to do when such arrangements are not enough? A normal collective agreement is legally binding for every person it covers, but what le-

gal effects does a transnational agreement really have? Could the business group leadership in France force a daughter business in another country to respect the agreement? Could a Czech trade union, unhappy with how the agreement is implemented, go to court to prove its point? And is it worthwhile for a Suez employee in Finland to summon the employer if she has been given fewer shares than what the French collective agreement stipulates?

There are no common EU rules on this. Each country has its own rules on how negotiations are held, which consequences a collective agreement should have and who is bound by it. And these rules differ a great deal. A Nordic collective agreement might not even be considered as a collective agreement in a different country. But since companies and European trade unions do now enter agreements which are meant to be valid in several countries, the EU Commission wants common rules on how the parties can give the agreements legal status - if they so wish. In other words; there are no plans for making *all* transnational agreements legally binding.

A team of researchers presented proposals for a voluntary solution back in 2006, but it was met with little enthusiasm from the parties to the labour market. The European employers' organisation BusinessEurope is vehemently opposed to any rules, even voluntary ones. The trade unions felt the suggestions weren't good enough.

But the Commission does not give up. It has continued its work with experts from all member countries and plans to present a new proposal in 2011. Researchers across Europe are working with the same questions, partly at Stockholm University's research programme Regulating Markets and Labour (ReMarkLab). Leading researchers will meet at an international conference in early April to present their contributions to the debate.

It is not hard to see the advantages transnational agreements can have for workers. In countries with weak trade unions they could help improve conditions immediately. Stronger unions, like the Nordic ones, might feel they handle negotiations on members' behalf better on their own, at least in the short term. On the other hand major differences in terms of employment could weaken national collective agreements in the long run.

There are evidently advantages to common rules even for employers, as the recent increase in cross-border agreements within multi-national companies shows. You could argue some of these agreements are hardly obligatory at all and serve mainly as window-dressing - especially agreements on fundamental rights. But this does not apply to all agreements. Some show clear ambition to enter binding agreements, and in some of them it is even explicitly stated that the agreements are binding. In such cases it makes sense to have rules which help the parties to realise the real consequences of their agreement.

The only question is how these rules should look. This is all easier said than done.



Challenge to Finland's health sector "not due to lack of resources"

Finland's health and social care sector is facing major challenges. But this is not about a lack of resources. Systems and processes need an overhaul to allow doctors and nurses to work with what they have been trained for: to take care of people, Finland's Minister of Social Affairs and Health Juha Rehula tells Nordic Labour Journal.

PORTRAIT

07.03.2011

TEXT: CARL-GUSTAV LINDÉN, PHOTO: MIKAEL NYBACKA

Just a few weeks before the parliamentary elections Juha Rehula is not busy campaigning. He wants to see his term as government minister through.

"If you haven't got four years to show what you can, no campaign is going to help you," he says. The Center Party politician entered the Finnish government just under a year ago almost by coincidence when his predecessor Liisa Hyssälä left politics. He is now very busy getting a range of important reforms through parliament before the April general elections and the inevitable political reshuffle which follows.

The health and social care sector budget makes up a considerable part of Finland's budget, taking up €19 billion out of the total €54 billion annual budget. There is no shortage of challenges. Far too many youths have problems which could see them ending up as social outsiders even before they've taken one step inside working life. Rehula has just met his Swedish colleague, Minister for Social Security Ulf Kristersson, in Stockholm to discuss the problem of young people taking early retirement.

Rehula shows us an article in Swedish tabloid Aftonbladet on young Swedish pensioners.

"We're in the exact same situation. It's part of working life but we must think of a way to reach young people before they fall through the system."

This is also about being able to guarantee that everyone who can work will work and pay taxes. When a large generation reaches retirement age it becomes difficult to finance the health and social sector.

"We cannot afford this in two ways. We cannot afford losing them and continue funding sickness benefits. We need them in working life."

Juha Rehula doesn't see the challenges in the health and social care sector as a result of a lack of resources, but more as a question of re-prioritisation and of managing new, smarter solutions. Finland now has more doctors and nurses and other resources than ever before.

"We must really shape up to move forward, the resources are there. The debate about public versus private care - good versus bad - is completely unnecessary. Health sector financing must be re-examined, it is a product of its time."

Juha Rehula feels those who work in the health and social care sector should be allowed to get on with what they are trained to do, namely to look after people. While some bureaucracy is necessary, doctors should not have to spend their days filling in forms.

Long career

Juha Rehula is 48 this summer and has been a national politician since 1996. Before that he spent many years as a municipal politician and as a municipal employee.

But people who don't know him are wrong when they think he has been involved with politics his whole adult life. He was born into a farming family and was given his first bit of land to grow sugar beets at the age of three.

"I was 6 or 7 when I got my first pay for weeding the beet fields - one penny per square metre. I have never received pocket money, only pay for work."

He spent his earnings from the sugar beet fields to buy a cassette player.

"We kept it in a backpack and played Hurriganes and Juice Leskinen (popular Finnish artists) while we were working. The backpack was passed around between friends. We kept it with us at all times."

Juha Rehula had a summer job at a factory making refrigerators, he has been a surveyor's assistant, a warehouse assistant in a hardware store, he has worked at a sawmill and he has filled various municipal roles.

Started his own

He experienced how difficult it could be to qualify for means tested social assistance during the economic crisis in the early 1990s when he couldn't find a job. His partner, now wife, drew a salary which meant Rehula ended up without any unemployment benefit. He had to start his own business instead.

"Officially I have not been unemployed for one single day, but I worked with my own company for several years."

This is his work history.

"I have managed to work for a surprising number of years.

He got his first staff job as late as in 1996, which was the same year he entered parliament and as a result had to resign almost immediately.

A good employer?

"Father was a good employer and the most important thing was that he taught me the value of money. We were paid to work. Every time we needed money we needed a very good argument. I think that is a good system."

Realist

Juha Rehula says he is realistic about what he has achieved during his brief period of power.

"I belong to a group of politicians who say nobody can make something happen on their own, not even government ministers.

Among the issues Rehula is proud of is the reform of means-tested social assistance and the reduction in queues to apply for changes to income linked social protection. When he started the wait was 17 months - now it is 13 months and the goal is six months.

The staff responsible for processing the amendments have been given more resources and the processes have been simplified.

"That's an area where I feel I have made an impact."

The biggest change is still happening though, and it is all about changing attitudes toward depression and working life. People dare talk about their illness as a normal thing. This also opens up opportunities to seek and receive help.

"We can change the laws as much as we want but if attitudes don't change, nothing happens.

The Masto project which just ended, focused on more active cooperation between health sector workers, workplaces, organisations and authorities in order to control the number of people taking early retirement because of depression.

"These are the things I will write about in my memoirs.

Juha Rehula's personal driving force is the human dimension. The morning we meet he has just heard about a young woman who has just been hired for the first time after a long period of rehabilitation and support work. These are the stories which make his work seem meaningful.