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Mar 05, 2014

# Newsletter from the Nordic Labour Journal 2/2014

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Theme: Gender equality of historic proportions



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# Women strongest in times of change

Nordic countries have cooperated on gender equality for 40 years. Now it's paying off. The Nordic Labour Journal's gender equality barometer shows Norway is a world leader in equality. For the first time ever, women and men have an equal share of positions of power.

EDITORIAL

05.03.2014

BY BERIT KVAM

Once upon a time people in Norway didn't think a woman could be Prime Minister and lead the country. Then we became so used to Gro [Harlem Brundtland] that we didn't think we could do without. Now we have Erna and Siv sharing power. That is interesting. When gender equality becomes visible, it does something to us. When Norway's social partners enter into this spring's wage negotiations, women will be leading both the Confederation of Trade Unions and the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise. It will be interesting to see the outcome.

The NLJ's gender equality barometer presented in this month's theme is historic. It shows women and men in Norway now have an equal share of power according to the parameters we have used. These things vary of course, but now Norway has shown it is possible, and the other Nordic countries are following suit. It is as if the gender dimension has been abolished.

The Finns have become gender blind, claims Finland's Ombudsman for Equality in the Portrait. People think Finland has achieved gender equality, so they can now concentrate on other issues. This is a good warning, because while power is more equally shared, the Nordic region still has a gender divided labour market and male dominated occupations still pay better. This pay gap is a stain on Finland's reputation, says Ombudsman Pirrko Mäkinen. But not only on Finland's reputation. On the Nordic reputation.

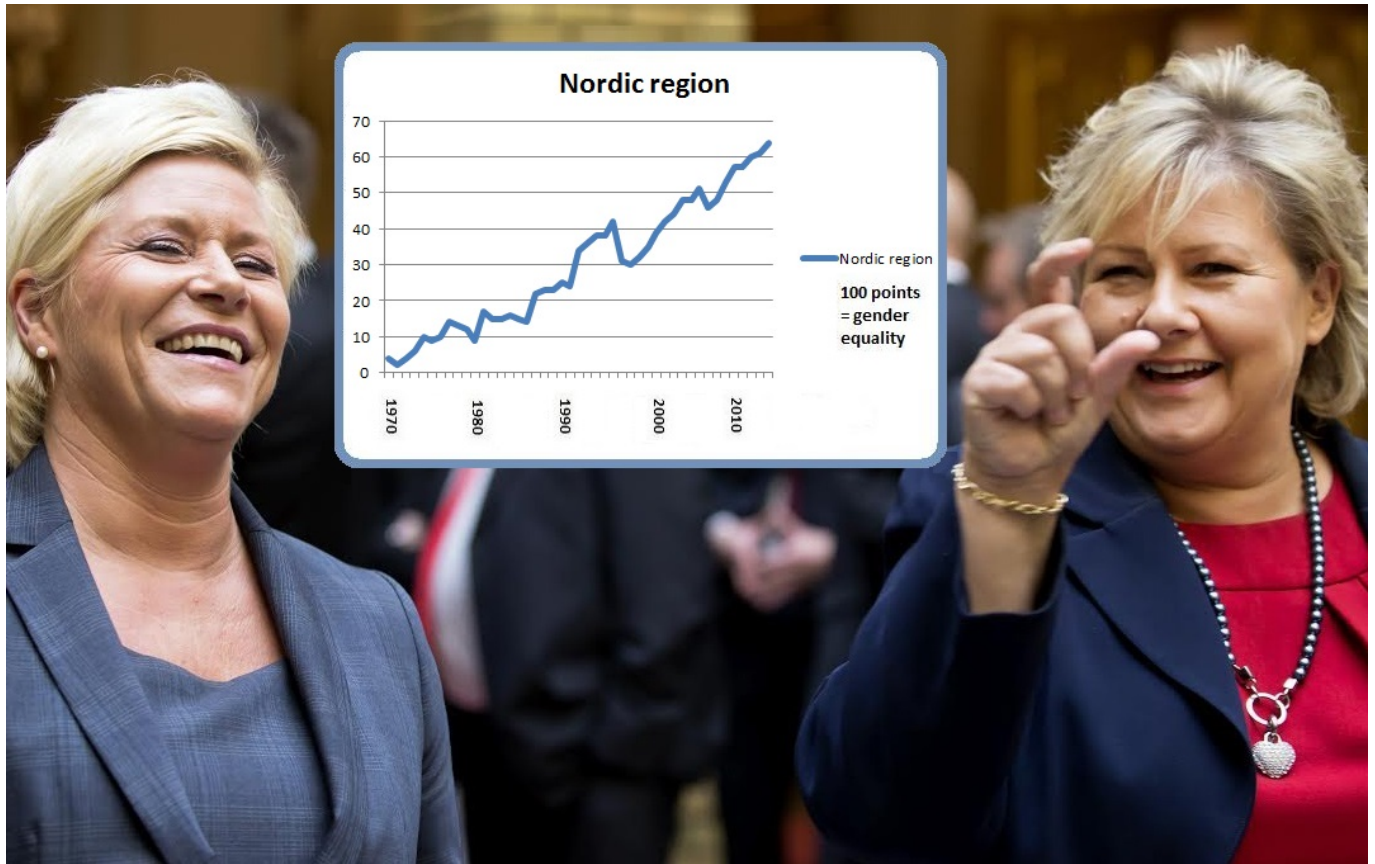
Denmark's Minister for Equality says gender equality is the key to integration. Manu Sareen thinks he has seen how many young people in minority communities get furious when their parents' attitudes clash with their own reality. That's why society must take action, he says.

The debate doesn't stop there. When Swedes work with motivation and training to get more women into leadership positions, it creates experiences we gladly share. Gender balanced organisations are sustainable and much more fun to

work for, says Storebrand's HR Director. We are not credible if we only have men as leaders, claims Anette Sägerkrantz.

Measuring gender equality in numbers shows us beyond doubt that quotas work. Norway has become a role model in Europe. Even Italy's boardrooms have become far more female heavy as a result of quotas. Perhaps that debate has something to do with the fact that eight of Italy's 16 new government ministers are women, and three of them are tasked with changing the constitution and electoral system.

What were once established truths are being measured against new thinking. In these changing times it is interesting that so many choose to put their faith in women.



Minister of Finance Siv Jensen (Progress) and Prime Minister Erna Solberg (Conservatives) gave a big jump in the NLJ's gender equality barometer for Norway. Progress in the rest of the Nordic region was less pronounced

## Norway lifts Nordic gender equality

For the first time ever a Nordic country has reached full gender equality in the Nordic Labour Journal's gender equality barometer. The barometer reflects the gender balance in 24 different positions of power in the Nordic societies. After a change of government last autumn, Norway has now reached 22 points. 20 points is needed for full gender equality.

THEME

05.03.2014

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL, PHOTO: ERLEND AAS, SCANPIX

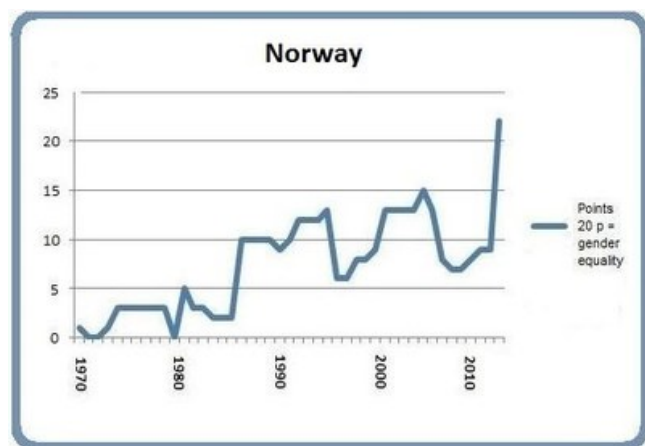
There are many ways of measuring gender equality. A female government minister does not necessarily pursue policies which improve equality between the sexes. Yet it is not irrelevant. It influences our perception of society and the opportunities it offers. In a Nordic first, Norway now has a female Prime Minister, a female Minister of Finance and female heads of both the Confederation of Trade Unions and the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise.

Other countries have gone backwards - mainly Iceland, which was only two points away from full gender equality in our 2013 barometer. As a new government came to power in 2013, Iceland plummeted down to eight points. That is the same level as Finland.

Country	Points 2014	Change
Denmark	16	- 1
Finland	8	+1
Iceland	8	- 10
Norway	22	+13
Sweden	10	-
The Nordic region	64	+3

Thanks to Norway the figure for the entire Nordic region reached 64 points, up three points on 2013. Since each country has a maximum of 40 points, or 200 points for all of the Nordic countries, 100 points would mean full gender equality. This means there is still some way to go. At the current speed the entire Nordic region will only reach full gender equality - measured by the NLJ's barometer - in 2035.

We measure the state of affairs at 8am on 8 March every year. There are still three days to go, so barring any last-minute changes here is an overview of what has happened over the past year.



### Norway

Not many days after the 2013 international women's day the Confederation of Vocational Unions (YS) chose Jorunn Berland as its new leader. That was on 10 March, and it gave Norway two points. Then followed Gerd Kristiansen as new head of the Confederation of Trade Unions, a heavyweight position which in our barometer is worth four points.

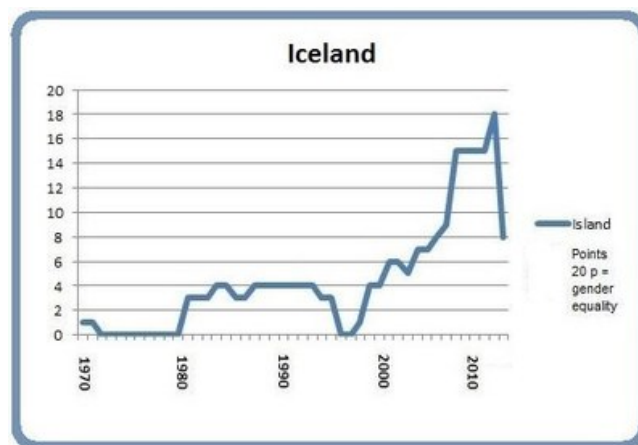
The grand slam came with the September general elections. Erna Solberg from the Conservative Party became Prime Minister (five points) and the Progress Party's Siv Jensen became Minister of Finance (three points). The new govern-

ment also has five ministers in positions which count towards the gender equality barometer.

That is how Norway rose from nine to 22 points (20 points equals full gender equality). Does that mean the entire country has reached gender equality? No, that would be overstating it, because equality still has some way to go in other areas.

The NLJ's gender equality barometer does not measure equality within industry and commerce. There are still only a few female CEOs. But Norway and Iceland have passed legislation saying public company boards must include at least 40 percent women.

Several of the most challenging issues facing the new Norwegian government have long been priority issues among feminists, like prostitution and abortion. The government wants to abolish the ban on buying sex, and it wants to give GPs the right to refuse hospital referrals to women who seek an abortion. This has been met with strong criticism from the political opposition and from women's groups.



### Iceland

Last year's number one, Iceland, was just two points away from full gender equality in 2013. But general elections in the spring saw a new government come to power on 23 May. This led to Iceland plummeting on the barometer. Prime Minister Johanna Sigurðardóttir stepped down after five years in the post. The new Prime Minister is Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson from the Progressive Party (Framsóknarflokkurinn - a centrist party).

Iceland's government consists of seven ministries, including the Prime Minister's office, but there are more than one government minister in some of them. Ragnheiður Elín Árnadóttir is the new Minister of Industry and Commerce, Eygló Harðardóttir is Minister of Social Affairs and Hanna Birna Kristjánsdóttir is the new Minister of the Interior. The latter post does not get any points in our barometer. Since Iceland has no ministries of labour, defence of culture, we

have given one extra point to government ministers in charge of those portfolios. As a result, the Minister of Social Affairs, who also oversees labour issues, gets one point. Culture comes under the Minister of Education, while defence is the responsibility of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The two latter positions are held by men.

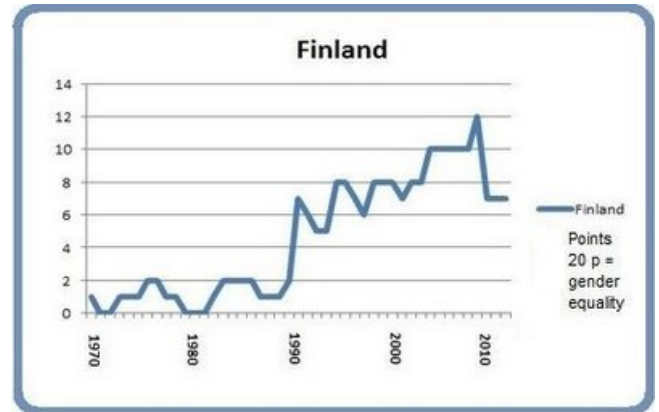
Iceland also gets four points for its female leaders of both the Confederation of State and Municipal Employees and the Association of Academics. On 24 June 2012 Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir became Iceland's first female bishop. Since Iceland only has one bishop, this earns the country one point. All in all Iceland gets eight points - half of what it got last year.



### Denmark

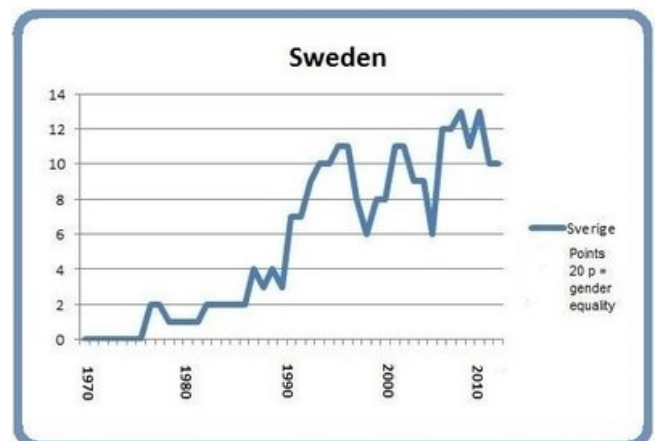
Denmark has had a change in government as the Socialist People's Party left the red-green coalition formed by Helle Thorning-Schmidt in 2011. This had no major effect on our barometer.

Changes were also being made in September 2013. The new female Minister for Transport, Pia Olsen Dyhr, could not compensate on the barometer for two new male government ministers for agriculture and the environment. This means Denmark loses one point on last year.



### Finland

Finland's political situation has been more stable. A small change in the government was made May 24 2013. Pia Viitanen then became the Minister of Communication and Finland gained one point. That leaves it with eight points. The only woman in a symbolically important position is Pauliine Koskelo, President of the Supreme Court.



### Sweden

Sweden has a new Minister for Employment in Elisabeth Svantesson, but her predecessor was also a woman. That is the only change in Sweden, which therefore remains at 10 points.

However, the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise will get a new female Director General, Carola Lemne. She takes up her post in May, after having held several leading positions within pharmaceutical companies and within the health service. There are general elections in Sweden this autumn.





If you want to make changes to improve the gender balance, someone might need to move over, says Anette Segercrantz

## Gender equality at the top influences the entire organisation

“If we want to be a sustainable company we need mixed leadership groups on all levels. We have no credibility if we have only men in management. We also see how it has a positive influence on the entire organisation and that it has become more fun to work,” says Anette Segercrantz, head of human resources at Storebrand, which comprises the Swedish pensions provider and consultancy firm SPP.

THEME

05.03.2014

TEXT: GUNHILD WALLIN, PHOTO: DAN COLEMAN

The answer comes super quick. Yes, SPP would love to talk with the Nordic Labour Journal about ‘The Battle of the Numbers’ and its work on gender equality. ‘The Battle of the Numbers’ was a Swedish project running for a year from No-

vember 2012, aiming to get more women into operational leadership positions.

“We are very happy to talk about this, because we can see the dynamics which emerges from having balanced groups, and how well people work together,” says Anette Segercrantz, head of human resources at Storebrand.

Sara Skärvad, SPP’s head of press and PR, agrees. She has been project leader for the ten women who took part in ‘the Battle of the Numbers’, and she says it was an easy job.

“If you’re the project leader for ten leading women you easily become superfluous. But when we saw these ten fantastic women we really began thinking — “have we been neglecting them?”, says Sara Skärvad.

Anette Segercrantz became SPP’s HR director in 2009, brought in by the then new CEO Sara Mc Phee. SPP is Sweden’s fourth largest fund manager, employs 500 people and has assets under management worth 140 billion Swedish kronor (€15.8bn). SPP is part of Norwegian Storebrand and Anette Segercrantz has been the HR director for the entire group since 2011. She works both in Stockholm and Oslo.

Sara Mc Phee was the first woman on SPP’s board of directors and Anette Segercrantz was the second. Both have been actively working to create a more equal gender division on a leadership level and in 2011 they reached 50/50 with some smaller variations over time.

“We were asked to take part in ‘The Battle of the Numbers’ because we were role models. It was really great and we said yes immediately,” says Anette Segercrantz.

They wanted to further their work towards a more equal gender division within the organisation and saw the possibilities offered by developing these issues together with colleagues in other big companies.

### **The starting point: women’s own experience**

‘The Battle of the Numbers’ was a project where ten major companies, including SPP, spent a year working together to figure out what stops women reaching leading positions. How do you change a culture which hinders women reaching their goals and how do you find concrete ways of doing it? Another goal was to find measurable effects. After one year the experiences proved to be good and they are shared willingly

Ten women from each company were selected to take part in ‘The Battles of the Numbers’ and Anette Segercrantz was one of the participants from SPP. Together with 99 other women from the ten big companies Ericsson, Scania, SEB, H&M, IKEA, pensions provider SPP, Saab, SSAB, Sandvik and Volvo, she has spent a year exploring gender equality issues in her workplace. Four joint workshops have allowed the participants to discuss, exchange experiences and identify obstacles and possible strategies for change, which later have resulted in concrete suggestions for change which have been presented to the respective group executive committees. The

goal has been to get more women into operational leadership positions.

“It is so cool that you begin to talk about the issue and also that you work on different processes together. That means the group executive will also take the issue seriously and become more engaged. That is needed,” says Anette Segercrantz.

The method centres on learning from the women’s own experiences. It is these experiences which form the starting point for a dialogue with the group executive. The concept is also built on the idea that the executives actively support it, and from the very beginning it was clear that the companies’ top leadership were behind the measure. All the CEOs were present at the project’s start, and they affirmed - also to the media - that more women in leadership positions were necessary to any successful business. Over the past year the ten women from each company have also been reporting straight back to their group executive committees.

“The Battle of the Numbers’ injected energy and we managed to get the majority of the organisation to help initiate and finish the project over twelve months. We had workshops with the company leadership, where we presented long lists of necessary changes “needed to become interesting and attractive employers”. We also learnt a lot about best practice from other companies. Through the project we created a boost and we probably also put a bit of extra pressure on each other,” says Anette Segercrantz.

### **Straight into the leadership group**

The work within Storebrand/SPP was also made easier by the fact that the company was undergoing a major reorganisation parallel to the project. During the autumn of 2013 everyone in the group executive were given new mandates and 50 new bosses were given new roles within the group.

“All vacant and new positions were advertised, these were open processes and we got internal mobility. That resulted in the creation of many new positions which would report to the group executive,” says Anette Segercrantz.

Today 38 percent of the group executive is women, compared with 22 percent in 2012. The number of women in operational leadership positions stands at 42 percent, compared to 37 percent the year before. All departments on all levels must now demonstrate a gender balance within their leadership groups.

“If this is not possible, whoever is responsible must be able to explain why, or ‘go around once more’. The same goes if after final job interviews the choice is not between a man and a woman. The system of succession should also be balanced. If this is not the case, you need a plan for how to make it happen”, says Anette Segercrantz.



Increased rotation between top leaders is high on the agenda. Internal rotation increases attractiveness and keeps the tempo high. Nobody is forced to change jobs, but after three to five years in a top position it is desirable for people to move on to other jobs within the group.

“If you make changes to improve the gender balance, the consequence can be that somebody needs to move. You can benefit a lot from changing, even if it is tough for many. Making changes can sometimes hurt. And if you ask whether men sometimes need to step aside, the answer is yes,” says Anette Segercrantz.

### **A question of sustainability**

Surprisingly neither Anette Segercrantz nor Sara Skärvad talk much about gender equality. Instead they talk about sustainability and balance. One reason is that certain departments might need to recruit men as well as women, for instance within customer relations, HR and communication. The question ‘who are we missing’ must be part of every recruitment process. Employing a variety of people means better decision are being made because they will be based on more and different outlooks. Knowing this, it becomes important that employees have different educations, experiences, ethnicities, age and so on. This is sustainability, according to SPP. You also become a more attractive employer and get employees who think it is fun to work. This makes you interesting to customers too. Sustainable action moves focus away from what you do to how you do it.

“For this you need mixed groups. This will be picked up by customers and workers and we become more attractive to younger people. We aren’t credible when we preach sustainability and our leaders are all men from the same background and age. We want balance, and this has become self evident also on a group level,” says Anette Segercrantz.

One conclusion drawn is that when there is gender equality within the group executive, it affects the entire organisation. You automatically get mixed groups further down too.

“When you see the dynamics and how well people work together, more groups will want to achieve the same kind of balance in order to do a good job. You see opportunities and you see how much fun it is to work together. It spreads,” says Anette Segercrantz.

“We also see how the men change. Everyone’s a winner here. It is about the use of language, how people think, express themselves and act towards others. Mixed leadership groups create a different kind of dynamics. There is a great difference from before,” says Sara Skärvad.

Summing up their experiences from ‘The Battle of the Numbers’ and from their own work for change, they can list a number of gains. The organisation has become more open and freer, and more workers no longer worry about seeking leadership positions. There is also more talk about SPP exter-

nally and in more positive terms, which has resulted in a considerable increase in job applications. It is also interesting to note that the issues are very similar regardless of which company you look at, even though a classically male dominated manufacturing company will have a different starting point to a company with a more mixed base.

And the work goes on even though ‘The Battle of the Numbers’ has ended. What has been won must be maintained, other issues must be developed and improved.

“We will continue to work for mobility within the organisation and for how women can be recruited to top positions. Role models are important — a young woman might not fancy being the only woman in the bathtub,” says Anette Segercrantz.

### **Exporting the idea abroad**

‘The Battle of the Numbers’ will continue, but in Sweden the work will carry on in other ways which will be presented later this spring. The concept will also be exported to other countries.

Sofia Falk is the founder of Wiminvest, a company whose model of developing more female leaders by using their own experiences has been used in the project. She was also one of the people behind the initiative, alongside Cissi Elwin, editor in chief for Chef magazine and Eva Swartz Grimaldi from Bianchi café and cycles. Looking back on the year of ‘The Battle of the Numbers’ she is very pleased.

“So much has happened and I still think we haven’t seen the full span of this. The public debate has also made bosses look at women’s participation in operational leadership. I have spoken to many HR directors who also say that with the support of management it has become an important issue. People have started talking about women in a different way,” says Sofia Falk.

She stresses the importance of having the top leadership on board when making these changes - otherwise nothing will happen. The question of women’s leadership has also become easier to measure. You identify a goal, develop a way to reach it and measure what has happened. It becomes like other areas within the company.

“We have made it happen - putting words into action. We have made this measurable and we’ve seen the importance to the market,” she says.



Manu Sareen

## Manu Sareen: gender equality is key to integration

Denmark is about to face the lack of gender equality in ethnic minority communities head on. The Minister for Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, Manu Sareen, sees young immigrants beginning to rise up against the unequal treatment of girls and boys. He encourages everyone to join in.

THEME

05.03.2014

TEXT: MARIE PREISLER, PHOTO: JOHANNES JANSSON/NORDEN.ORG

Everyone must join the fight for more gender equality among ethnic minorities, says Denmark's Minister for Gender Equality Manu Sareen (Social Liberal Party). After the latest government reshuffle he is now also the Minister for Children, Integration and Social Affairs. Gender equality can be the missing key to integration, he tells the Nordic Labour Journal

"Suppression and a lack of gender equality in certain ethnic minority communities can be the key we have been looking for in order to achieve better integration. More gender equality means a better dialogue and better integration," says Manu Sareen.

When Denmark's government soon publishes its next action plan for gender equality in Denmark, measures aimed at ethnic minority communities will therefore have a higher priority than before.

Manu Sareen has roots in the immigrant community himself, and for 20 years he has worked with integration. He was born in India and moved to Denmark with his parents when he was three. He worked for many years as an educator and social worker before becoming a politician. So he has seen with his own eyes the large challenges when it comes to gender equality in parts of ethnic minority communities. In some cases, the minister says, there is in reality repression, and in the worst cases this results in violence or forced marriages. He used to believe gender equality problems would solve themselves, but he now says that he was wrong:

"Many of us though that with third generation immigrants in Denmark the gender equality problems would fade away, but this has not happened and I am worried. There have been structural progress - ethnic minority girls get better educations and more women have entered the labour market - but I still hear terrible stories about social control, submission and repression.

### **Strong social control**

He points out that there are some girls and women in ethnic minority communities who are being controlled in every little thing they do. They are not allowed to go to the public bath, attend birthday parties or school leaving celebrations. They are under massive pressure to stay virgins until they are married. Then there is a small group of women who live with violent husbands, and there are girls and boys - a minority the minister understands - who are used to corporal punishment.

There are numbers behind the minister's words: nine in ten immigrant girls experience their relationships and sexuality are being controlled, and one in three of these girls experience the social control as being strong. Many more women than before have contacted women's refuges because of honour related conflicts, and there is a similar boom in the number of young people who contact the Rehabilitation Center for Ethnic youth in Denmark.

This increase could be indicative of more people experiencing oppression and inequality. But it could also mean that more people are speaking out about these things. Both speak for action now, the minister points out. He says there will be new initiatives from the government's National strategy against honour related conflicts, which was launched in 2012. There is also still a need for continuing preventative measures and measures for changing attitudes aimed at exposed housing areas, as well as programmes in primary schools, says Manu Sareen.

### **Support for rebel youth**

He also promises to support young people from immigrant communities who he sees are about to rebel in anger against suppression and against the way girls and boys are being treated unequally. Young people will no longer put up with it, and that is fantastic, the minister thinks. He holds up the young Danish-Palestinian poet Yahya Hassan as an example. The writer's latest poetry collection deals with growing up with violence, abandonment and crime. It has become Denmark's best-selling debut collection ever, and has ignited the public debate.

The minister wants to support this youth rebellion through debates in the community, giving the young people even more power to say what it is they want.

"The core idea is that knowledge and debate leads to change, and we want to reach out and support the parents when things turn difficult," says Manu Sareen.

### **Danish parents take action**

But it is also necessary for the parents of ethnically Danish children to raise their voice, he says. We must not close our eyes to suppression, and to the fact that young girls are being kept at home.

"When Fatima is not allowed to attend a birthday party and when her parents don't show up to the school's parents' evening, the other parents must react and explain to them why it is important to take part. We politicians can pass legislation and municipalities can create projects, but the next big step must be taken by us Danes together."

The minister doesn't want to speculate whether Danes so far have left Fatima out in the cold because they are conflict avoiders and don't want to interfere in other cultures and traditions.

"But there is room for improvement here. It is important that we safeguard our values when it comes to giving boys and girls equal opportunities, and that you and me dare to say out loud that some ways of doing things are better than others."

He also appeals to imams and other minority community leaders to react against suppression. Urgent action is needed if it is to have any influence on gender equality and integration in the coming decade, thinks Manu Sareen.

His goal is greater gender equality but he is not saying young people from minority communities must adopt all Danish norms.

"In no way do we aim to make all young people part of the overriding Danish youth culture including alcohol and partying into the early hours. This can be good for some. It was good for me. But is it not good for everyone. What is good and should be a right for all is to have the freedom to choose and to have control over your own body," says Manu Sareen.

# The threat of quotas

Norway and Iceland have already introduced them and now boardroom gender quotas are rolling out across Europe.

THEME

05.03.2014

TEXT: CARL-GUSTAV LINDÉN

Governments in both Finland and in Sweden are pushing businesses to increase the number of women in their boardrooms, threatening to introduce quotas if nothing happens.

One reason why women are so well represented in listed companies in Finland and Sweden is that the countries' governments have decided there must be gender equality in state-owned companies - many of which are listed. This also increases pressure on other companies which have to answer to the public.

"The state can argue it has managed to find competent women, why haven't you?," says the Finnish Ombudsman for Equality Pirkko Mäkinen.

The Finnish Chamber of Commerce has also identified gender equality as a strategic goal. This summer the government will evaluate how successful the listed companies have been at finding women for their boards. Gender quotas will also be on the table.

## Legislation if companies don't change their attitude

The Swedish government has encouraged boardroom nomination committees at listed companies to go an extra mile this spring in order to find women. The Minister for Finance, Anders Borg (Conservatives) recently told Swedish Radio that he would introduce boardroom quota legislation within a couple of years if businesses didn't show "a considerable change in attitude".

Norway has led the way with quotas, and now all of the EU is heading that way too. In November the European Parliament approved the Commission's bill to introduce 40 percent quotas for listed companies by 2020, but the bill must be approved by member countries. Last year only 17 percent of board members were women and only four percent of board directors.

The ball is now in Germany's court and when Angela Merkel's new government has agreed to quotas, the rest of the EU will find it hard to resist. Germany has decided the share of

women in the country's 120 companies with more than 2000 employees must be 30 percent by 2016. Other companies must identify binding goals to increase the number of women in top positions and on boards.

If enough member countries, two thirds, back the bill before the European elections in May, the quota bill will pass into law.

## Sceptical Danes

The Danish government is against quotas and is also sceptical to the EU Commission's bill. It has chosen to present its own model where 1,100 of the country's largest companies themselves will identify goals for boardroom gender distribution. Sweden also protested against the Commission's bill last year, but now the tide seems to have turned.

The UK has also been opposed to quotas, despite the fact that the British government has already decided women must make up at least 25 percent of boardrooms in the country's 100 largest companies. Labour has now said it will introduce 30 percent quotas if they win the elections next year. Some businesses have jumped on the bandwagon, and recently Lloyds Bank decided women should fill at least 40 percent of the bank's top positions by 2020.

According to the EU Commission's database of men and women in decision making in Europe, Iceland and Norway top the list while Denmark is worst off among the Nordic countries, and finds itself near the middle of the EU statistics. The information is also available in a Commission report on gender and leadership.

Country	Women on boards	Female board directors
EU 28	17 %	4 %
Denmark	21 %	0 %
Finland	29 %	4 %

Country	Women on boards	Female board directors
Iceland	49 %	11 %
Norway	42 %	15 %
Sweden	26 %	4 %

Source: The EU Commission





President Giorgio Napolitano and ministers in the Renzi government at the inauguration at the Palazzo del Quirinale, 22 February 2014

## Italy chooses women in times of crisis

Half of Italy's new government ministers are women. What impact will that have on a country with Europe's lowest female employment rate? Prime Minister Matteo Renzi promises change. He wants immediate reforms and to get the economy going. Yet so far the boardroom quota legislation seems to be having the greatest impact on gender equality.

THEME

05.03.2014

TEXT AND PHOTOS IN ARTICLE: BERIT KVAM

"The situation is uncertain but sparkling, and his style is really new. I am quite optimistic and hopeful about the possibility of this Government to introduce important reforms," says Carla Collicelli, Deputy Director at the prestigious research institute Censis in Rome.

Paola Profeta, who does research on public policies and gender equality at the Bocconi University in Italy is also optimistic about the possibility of change:

"It sends a strong signal to the country when the number of women in government reaches 50 percent. This has never happened before in Italy. With that Renzi has also fulfilled



his earlier promise of having as many women as men in government. It is too early to provide a deeper analysis, but we have great expectations,” Paola Profeta tells the Nordic Labour Journal.

Italy is in a deep crisis. The economy is showing signs of recovery for the first time since 2008, yet unemployment is still rising. According to Istat the total unemployment is 12.9 percent, 13.8 among women and 42.4 percent among 15 to 24 year olds. Italy’s female employment rate, meanwhile, is 47.1 percent. It varies from 56.6 percent in the north to 30.8 percent in the south. Only Malta is lower down on European statistics.

Matteo Renzi took over as Italian Prime Minister on 24 February after winning the fight for the confidence of his own political party, the Democratic Party (PD). Former Prime Minister Enrico Letta had to step aside because he achieved too little. But Renzi still needs the support from more or less the same politicians as Letta did, across political divides. There have not been fresh elections in Italy. Matteo Renzi is therefore the third Prime Minister after Mario Monti and Enrico Letta who does not carry a mandate from democratic elections, but who has been appointed by President Giorgio Napolitano. Renzi now promises to do something about the electoral system which has created this unstable situation.

Some of the women in government are experienced and well renowned, others not. Carla Collicelli says more women is a positive thing regardless.



“The effect of women in government can only be a good one. I say that not based on ideology, but based on my experience; even the worst woman is better than a man, at least when it

comes to paying attention to transparency and clarity of purpose for the case in question.”

She is “very much in favour of the Renzi government”. Not just because of the number of women, but because of expectations of deep and real change in Italian society.

Many noticed the direct, personal and casual form Matteo Renzi used during his inaugural speech. But the new style is more fundamental than that, thinks Carla Collicelli and refers to a comment written by Renzi in the publisher Donzelli’s re-issue of ‘Right and left’ - ‘Destra e Sinistra’, Norberto Bobbio’s best seller first published twenty years ago. Here Renzi points out the need for deep and sustainable reforms with strategic goals, she says. He thinks party politics and traditional socio-political divisions are outdated and that it is necessary to meet our modern times in completely new ways. The Social Democrats made great progress some decades ago and the social welfare which has been achieved in Europe is absolutely well worth defending, but times have changed. You cannot make progress by using the same old methods which have had catastrophic consequences for people in Europe. It is time for new, restless social dynamics.

This alternative thinking is brave and it explains Renzi’s direct and personal way of communicating in public debate, says sociologist Carla Collicelli.

“Renzi not only has an innovative, verbal and communicative style. His very serious purpose is to implement deep and real change. We expect to see real change in the distribution of wealth for the middle classes, a growing economy, a reduction in costs related to the political classes and top bureaucrats and of course we expect jobs for young people,” says Carla Collicelli.

### **Gender quotas most important so far**

When Italian radio and TV, RAI, celebrate women with their own seminar, Paola Profeta is an obvious keynote speaker. She has been very visible in the public debate on gender equality in Italy. Eight out of 16 government ministers being women is a good start, she says.



“That’s good, but of course it is no magic recipe for getting to grips with the gender gap.”

She refers to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index, which puts Italy at number 82 out of 132 countries, and at 101 when it comes to economic opportunities for women.

“But it is a good signal which can help break down stereotypes and it has great potential. For now, though, I still think boardroom gender quotas is the most important political change we have seen so far. We need many more reforms in the years to come. The fact that half of our ministers are now women must help.”

One of Paola Profeta’s areas of research is the consequences of the law on boardroom gender quotas, which was introduced in Italy from 2012. It covers state-owned and listed private companies. The aim is to have at least 20 percent of each sex in boardrooms by 2015, and 33 percent in 2018. Here she shows the development of Italy’s boardroom representation from 1934 to 2013.

## Donne nei CDA, società quotate, Italia

Women corporate board representation, 1934-2013



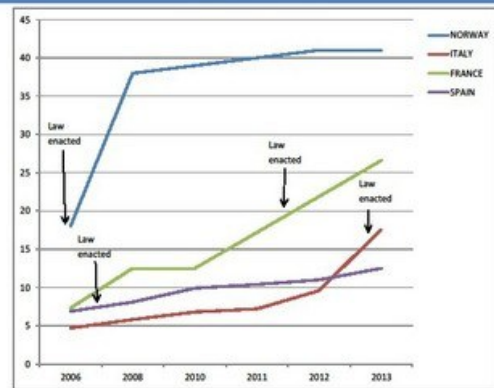
Source:

From 1934 to 1998: Gamba, M. & Goldstein, A. (2009). The gender dimension of business elites: Italian women directors since 1934, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 14(2), 199-225.  
From 1998 to 2009: Aliberti Governance Advisors on Consob.  
From 2009: Authors’ elaboration on Consob.

At RAI’s women’s conference Profeta presents numbers which show how the share of women in boardrooms has more than doubled in the past year. From 8.11 percent on 4 May 2012 to 17.64 percent on 3 February 2014. The number has risen from 207 women in May 2012 to 407 in February 2014. At the same time the total number of board representatives has fallen from 2,552 to 2,307. Another 769 seats are needed to achieve a 33 percent female boardroom representation.

The graph below shows the development in several countries which have introduced boardroom gender quotas.

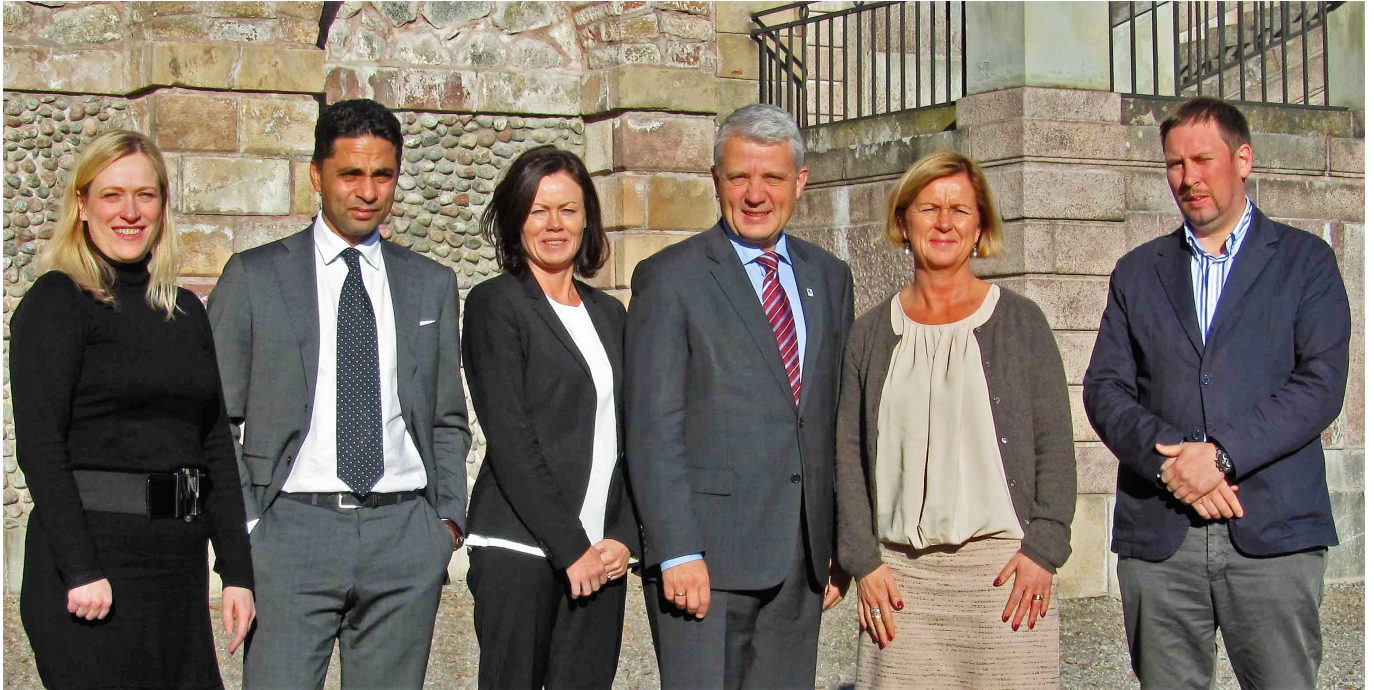
## Evoluzione della presenza femminile nei CDA: Hard laws



Introducing the legislation was nothing short of a revolution, claims Paola Profeta.

“Yes, I do want to use that word, because this means such a major change that we still can’t see the consequences. There are ten thousand companies which must make changes to their board representation, and who must now take women into consideration. It might not be a big revolution, it moves slowly forward, but it is moving forward,” she says.





Nordic ministers for gender equality and the Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretary General Dagfinn Høybråten (middle). From left: Eygló Harðardóttir, Iceland; Manu Sareen, Denmark; Solveig Horne, Norway; Maria Arnholm, Sweden and Paavo Arhinmäki, Finland

## 40 years of Nordic gender equality cooperation

There are two ways to compare different countries' gender equality policies. You could look at the number of women reaching power or you could look at current policies. The two don't necessarily tell the same story.

THEME

05.03.2014

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL, PHOTO: HEIDI ORAVA, NORDEN.ORG

It was a male government minister, Ansgar Gabrielsen, who finally decided to introduce female boardroom quotas in Norway. Historians point out that this was an issue which had long been championed by female politicians. But you cannot deny that Gabrielsen played a crucial role when he ignored his own Conservative Party's stand and launched what is the Nordic region's most radical change for gender equality in recent years.

When the Director for the Norwegian Nobel Institute, Geir Lundestad, wants to explain why the Peace Prize has got such a high standing in the world, he usually says it is because it belongs to a family of other prizes. As a result, the awards

have gained a higher status than they would have had as individual prizes.

In the same way you could say Nordic gender equality benefits from the fact that the Nordic countries are one family. Gender equality can increase or decrease in one individual country, but there is always something which the other countries can take inspiration from. Looking at the five countries as a group, the differences are evened out and it becomes easier to see that the trend towards a more equal society has been constant since the 1970s.

## 40 years of cooperation

Gender equality is also one of the issues on which the Nordic countries have cooperated the most. This has been going on for 40 years. The Nordic Council of Ministers decided as early as 1974 that each Nordic government should appoint one person who would be in touch with the other Nordic administrations over gender equality issues.

Participants at the contact group's first meeting the following year were Edel Saunte from Denmark, Pirkko Kiviaho from Finland, Kari Vagnsnes from Norway and Ingemar Lindberg from Sweden. The first seminar on gender equality in working and family life was held in Glumslöv in Sweden. There, the Nordic countries agreed to send a joint delegation to the 1975 women's conference in Mexico.

An action plan for Nordic cooperation on gender equality issues was ready by 1978 and a committee of senior officials was established.

### The dream: gender equality around the corner

This was a time when the dream of gender equality was stronger than ever before, and where the new and equal society seemed to be just around the corner. The cover illustration for the first national plan for gender equality in Sweden in 1979 shows male lawyers feeding milk to babies and female joiners teaching their daughters how to handle tools like screwdrivers and pliers.



Some of the plan's conclusions included:

- Students' subject and career choice is highly gender based. The labour market is still divided into male and female occupations.

- Women have continued to enter the labour market in large numbers during the 1970s, especially women with children under seven.
- Women are still doing most of the housework.

Certain goals have not been met - and might never become reality:

- It is important to instigate a general shortening of the working day, aiming for a six hour day.

Other goals have been met, like offering all children a nursery place. In 1979 this was available to only a third of all preschool children.

### Few women with a driver's licence

Some of the problems seem foreign to us today:

"The concentration of service facilities together with the spread of housing has in many instances led to unreasonably long walking distances for consumers. Physical strength and access to a car has become necessary, and a majority of consumers are women. Women, however, do not have the same access to cars as men, and many do not have a driver's licence. Women are twice as likely as men to use public transport to travel to work. Long distances and poor public transport between home, work and service facilities make them time-poor and limit their amount of spare time."

But there was still great optimism. As long as the school curriculum was changed, children would grow up to become gender equal citizens. But gender roles would prove to be more difficult to change than many had thought.



A 2008 Danish report on the gender divided labour market concludes:

"In Denmark men and women do not do the same work. Just 15 percent work in occupations with approximately 50/50 gender distribution, and there is no doubt this gender divi-



sion is a main reason why men and women still do not get equal pay.”

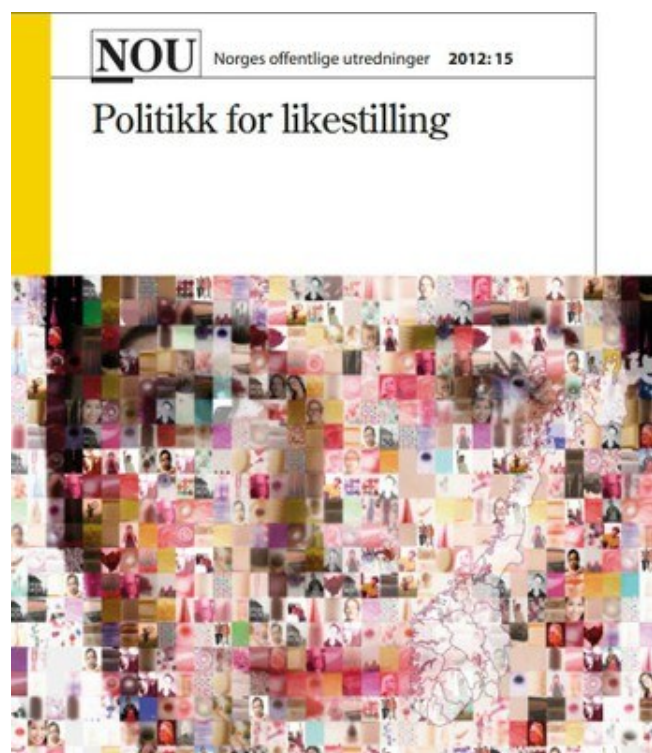
### World leaders in gender equality

Nevertheless, the Nordic countries have many reasons to be proud over their achievements on gender equality. They stay in the top 10 of global gender equality indexes.

Nordic cooperation has increased its focus through prioritised and pan-national projects like the 1987 cooperation on *More women to the computer sector* and *Muslim immigrant women*.

If you read the chronological overview of all cooperation projects, which are found at the back of the cooperation programme for 2011-2014 *Gender equality creates a sustainable society*, it is striking just how many gender equality issues are now the subject of Nordic cooperation. With greater globalisation the important issues become more sombre: in 2007 Nordic gender equality ministers discussed trafficking. There is increased awareness that gender equality can no longer be seen as something which can be achieved isolated in the Nordic region. Immigration means we are also influenced by how women are treated in other cultures.

Looking at one of the major recent gender equality studies, Norway's 'NOU: Gender equality policies 2012:15', there are many things which are less self-evident than they were in the 1970s. The study, led by Professor Hege Skjeie, discussed “why Norwegian society needs a gender equality policy and what its aim should be”.



The study's cover is a collage of hundreds of small images. If you squint you can make out a woman's face.

The study answers the question with pointing out that gender equality is needed because it is a universal right:

“A society which does not guarantee its citizens the respect and the rights and the citizenship which follow, is an unjust society.”

Gender equality cannot be motivated by the fact that it increases growth:

“Productivity and other utilitarian considerations can tie in with gender equality policies, but cannot be used as a fundamental reason for having them.”

The Norwegian study talks about the need for a multi-dimensional gender equality policy, which also takes into account the fact that immigrant women are being doubly discriminated against.

The latest decade has also seen an increased focus on the role of men. Masculinity is the theme for one of the conferences planned for 2014, during Iceland's Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Other dimensions include how gender equality is developing in autonomous regions. During the Council's 2006 Copenhagen session the debate heated up when the Faroe Islands' independence within Nordic cooperation was being discussed. Opponents pointed to the discrimination of homosexuals as one reason for saying no to such independence.

Will we be surprised if gender equality is still an issue for Nordic cooperation in 40 years from now?



Pirkko Mäkinen, Ombudsman for Equality

## The salary gap: a stain on Finland's reputation

When it comes to female representation in business and politics, Finland is a leader in the EU in a range of fields. The Ombudsman for Equality, Pirkko Mäkinen, is particularly pleased with the fact that Finland has better female representation in boardrooms than any other EU country - 27 percent - without having to use gender quotas.

PORTRAIT

05.03.2014

TEXT: CARL-GUSTAV LINDÉN

Compared to its Nordic neighbours, Finland even has a high proportion of women in political positions of power. But apart from that, she finds little cause for celebration.

"When it comes to salary gaps, we are in the middle, or even a bit below," Pirkko Mäkinen tells the NLJ.

She also feels Finns have become gender blind: people seem to think that gender equality has been achieved and that is time to move on and deal with other difficult issues. This is

one of the reasons why immigration issues are being debated much more than women's problems in working life.

"It is disconcerting. Young people are very equal and they encounter the problems only when they enter into the labour market, like when women return to work after maternal leave and their work tasks no longer exist."

There is also an ongoing debate about men's position in Finnish society. There is a large group of men who for various



reasons - low education, illness, social exclusion - have become outsiders and there is increasing talk about men having a much shorter lifespan than women.

Her own driving force is the chance to work on a daily basis with human rights, to identify problems and to fix them within the confines of the law.

Work is now going on to extend gender equality legislation to include sexual minorities. Mäkinen says efforts to fight discrimination improve the situation for everyone in a workplace, not only for those who have been facing problems. She also takes a particular interest in immigrant women, because they risk falling in between the Ombudsman for Equality and the Ombudsman for Minorities' areas of responsibilities.

"At school Somali girls are advised to become nurses instead of being informed of all their opportunities. This is common but very hidden."

### **Proud tradition**

In 1906 Finland became the world's first country to give women the right to vote and to run for office. The country has also become known for its female government ministers and one president, but the country did not get a law securing gender equality until 1987. That is also when the Ombudsman for Equality position was established. Mäkinen, a trained lawyer, has held the position the longest and is now in her third period, which will end in 2017. Her first period began on the same day as Finland became an EU member.

The Ombudsman for Equality has from the very start been involved in working life issues. Mostly she deals with discrimination in the recruitment process or wages, temporary job contracts or problems linked to pregnancy or parental leave.

Finland is unique in that nearly as many women as men are in work. It is easier to achieve a good work/life balance in Finland compared to for instance in the south of Europe.

"Having a child does not mean you have to go part-time."

The government is trying to reduce the pay gap between women and men from 20 percent in 2006 to no more than 15 percent by 2015, but right now Finnish women earn 83 percent out of each euro men get paid, so it doesn't look good. Finnish law says all workplaces with more than 30 employees must have a gender equality plan which registers salaries, but in reality the Ombudsman for Equality's office has not got the necessary resources to follow this up.

### **The public sector**

Although pay gaps have been debated for decades, the gender equality work is slow. One contributing factor to the pay gap is that women are more likely to work in the public sector where wages are on average lower than in the private sector.

Women are best represented as leaders in the public sector where the government and parliament has decided they should hold at least 40 percent of the top positions.

"On the other hand, the municipal sector is very male dominated," says Mäkinen.

Many municipal jobs are female dominated, however - mainly within the healthcare sector and in education. Finland might time and again top the Pisa tables which measure what 15 year olds have learned, but this is not reflected in salaries, despite the fact that Finnish teachers must have a university education in order to get the formal skills they need. The same goes for other female dominated occupations.

"A librarian once said the man driving the library bus was better paid than her despite her university degree," says Pirkko Mäkinen.

Conditions are not great for gender equality in private business: a survey commissioned by the Pro trade union showed 36 percent of men had leadership positions compared to only 6 percent of women. Men also get higher bonuses and are offered more training than women in the same positions.

"We consider engineers to be leaders, and that training is completely male dominated. There are women within HR and communication, but not in the hardcore business areas."

Listed companies' leadership groups consisted of 19.2 percent women towards the end of last year, which is only a little bit behind Sweden but clearly better than Denmark. Yet there was only one female CEO.

The Nordic region and the EU are important reference groups for Pirkko Mäkinen. She finds effective solutions and models through discussions with her colleagues. All countries are facing the same problems, from discrimination to media stereotypes, strange views on women and men.

"The economic situation is depressing and it is easy to dismiss these issues as "luxury worries."

# Unique judgement - managers guilty of employee's suicide

In Sweden two managers at a social services centre were found guilty in February of causing an employee's depression and suicide. The judgement is unique. Never before has an employer been found guilty of causing psychological illness, and regardless of whether it is overturned on appeal this judgement serves as a wake-up call for Swedish employers.

NEWS

05.03.2014

TEXT: KERSTIN AHLBERG, EDITOR EU & ARBETSRÄTT

The man was employed as a social worker in a small municipality in Northern Sweden, and dealt with cases involving the care of substance abusers. He had been doing the job for three years - and was very happy with it - when he in the spring of 2009 got a new supervisor with a new leadership style. Things soon turned sour between them. She criticised his work time after time in a way which he felt to be harassment. Towards the end of that year the man approached their head of unit and asked to be moved. Between new year and his suicide in June 2010 he continued to appeal to both his head of unit and the municipality's head of social services for new job tasks. He asked for "mercy" and offered to take on any work whatsoever. Even his colleagues and his wife approached the two managers on several occasions and begged them to do something about the conflict, because the man was growing increasingly depressed.

## **Made redundant**

They answered by sending him to see a psychologist and a doctor, and carried out what was meant to be a bullying investigation. This comprised of the head of unit asking the supervisor for her opinion on the matter, and taking into account her description of how badly the man was doing his work. So rather than doing something about his work situation, the managers told him he would be made redundant. On the same day that he and his trade union representative were due to meet the employer to discuss his situation, he took his own life. The Swedish Pensions Agency later concluded his death was caused by a work-related injury.

The people now found guilty of causing his illness and death are the head of unit and the head of social services. The supervisor whom the man felt was his tormentor was not charged. This was because the head of unit and the head of social services were responsible as employers and therefore should, in the words of the Work Environment Act, plan,

direct and control the activities in order to create a good working environment and prevent ill health. And in this they failed, according to the Östersund District Court.

## **Obligated to intervene**

The court says there is no doubt both people were aware of the existing cooperation problems and the fact that the man felt very bad because of this. Therefore they were obliged to interfere. The fact that they facilitated contact between the man and occupational health was not adequate, they were still responsible for the situation in the workplace and for what needed to be done there. They should therefore have carried out a proper investigation and considered whether it was possible to change the working conditions within the unit, but they didn't even investigate whether it was possible to find him another workplace.

The court also concluded that the managers told the man he was being made redundant without really looking into whether there were legal reasons for this — the court says there weren't — and despite the fact they knew about the suicide risk. They were therefore in breach of the Work Environment Act by causing another person's death, and were given suspended sentences and severe penalty payments. The two managers will most probably appeal.

The Work Environment Act makes it very clear that employers must "take all necessary measures" in order to prevent psychological illness as well as accidents and physical illness. But the Swedish Work Environment Authority, which stipulates what the act means in more concrete terms in different areas and for different types of risks, has so far not managed to come up with any binding provisions covering how to prevent psychological illness. The authority has only issued so-called general recommendations in this area. This means it has been difficult to use the sanctions which do exist with-

in the Work Environment Act in order to pursue employers who fail to take responsibility for their workers' psychological health. Perhaps the judgement from the Östersund District Court will be the trigger which gets the preventative work going. Regardless of whether an appeal succeeds or not, this is a real wake-up call for Sweden's employers.

# Mikael Sjöberg new head of the Swedish Public Employment Service

The Swedish Public Employment Service has a new Director-General. Mikael Sjöberg comes from the post as Director-General at the Swedish Work Environment Authority. The Employment Service's former head was fired in August last year.

NEWS

03.03.2014

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL

When Mikael Sjöberg was introduced at a press conference on 27 February he said "trust" was the most important issue for the Public Employment Service.

The state authority has been criticised for not getting more people into work. The day before Sjöberg's appointment, the Employment Service called in 61,000 people in error for an information meeting meant for 1,400. The result: chaos at Tunnelgatan in central Stockholm.

It is hard to paint a clearer picture of how many people are looking for jobs and of a failing authority.

Now Mikael Sjöberg wants to get to grips with the problems and opportunities.

"I feel proud and humble. It is a large and complex authority I am now about to head. It is a meaningful yet challenging task," he says.

Sweden tops Nordic unemployment tables with 8.6 percent.

"Mikael Sjöberg's long and broad experience from leading positions in Swedish public administration will be valuable for the work the Public Employment Service will continue to do in order to get more people into jobs and to allow more employers to hire," says the Minister for Employment.

Mikael Sjöberg is 46. From 1994 he worked as a government civil servant. In 2005 he took on the job as Director-General of the then National Institute for Working Life. Two years later he became Director-General of the Swedish Work Environment Authority. He is a cousin of former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson.