

**Portrait**

Kristin Lund: No shortcuts to gender equality in the armed forces

**News**

Three Swedish initiatives for increased gender equality

**Editorial**

Gender equality important to parents and generals alike

**News**

Finnish government seeks help to find work for more people

Mar 04, 2016

# Newsletter from the Nordic Labour Journal 2/2016

Newsletter from the Nordic Labour Journal 2/2016

Theme: Gender equality in war and peace



Financed by  
Nordic Council of  
Ministers

## **NORDIC LABOUR JOURNAL**

Work Research Institute  
OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University,  
Postboks 4 St. Olavs plass, NO-0130  
Oslo

## **PUBLISHER**

Work Research Institute, OsloMet  
commissioned by the Nordic Council of  
Ministers.

## **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Björn Lindahl

## **EMAIL**

nljeditor@gmail.com

## **WEB**

[www.nordiclabourjournal.org](http://www.nordiclabourjournal.org)

An email edition of the newsletter can  
be ordered free of charge from  
[www.nordiclabourjournal.org](http://www.nordiclabourjournal.org)

ISSN 1504-9019 tildelt: Nordic labour  
journal (online)



## **Contents**

Gender equality important to parents and generals alike .....	3
Kristin Lund: No shortcuts to gender equality in the armed forces .....	4
Commander-in-chief only position of power not yet held by woman.....	7
Defining Sweden's feminist foreign policy.....	9
A slight dip in gender equality in Nordic positions of power .....	12
Finnish government seeks help to find work for more people .....	15
Three Swedish initiatives for increased gender equality .....	17
I am incredibly thankful for part time work! .....	19
Danish parents want Swedish part time conditions .....	21
New Swedish work environment strategy: No more fatal work accidents .....	23
Iceland's Confederation of Labour turns 100 in a more equal labour market .....	25

# Gender equality important to parents and generals alike

Last year Denmark got its first female leader for the confederation of trade unions, and Norway got its first female chief justice of the supreme court. There are still a few positions of power not yet held by a woman among the 24 which the Nordic Labour Journal measures. But the only position never held by a woman in any Nordic country is commander-in-chief.

EDITORIAL

04.03.2016

BY BJÖRN LINDAHL, ACTING EDITOR

That is why we have chosen 'Gender equality in war in peace' as our theme when we present our gender equality barometer for the sixth time.

"There are no shortcuts if you want to get a female commander-in-chief. It takes the same amount of time to become a general or admiral whether you're a woman or a man," points out Major General Kristin Lund, who is the first female commander of a UN peacekeeping mission.

This year's barometer shows the total Nordic result is down three points. A total of 100 points signifies full gender equality in the 24 positions of power. This year women reached 66 points.

*"At the beginning there was a certain giggle factor, but this has been replaced with interest and respect."*

The slight dip hides the historically very strong, in female terms, Helle Thorning-Schmidt government in Denmark. Before it fell on 28 June last year, it had three female party leaders in prominent positions. In the current government led by Lars Løkke Rasmussen there are only two women among the 13 government posts which we measure.

There is no doubt all the Norwegian countries are studying each other. Danish parents of small children want the same rights to go part time as their Swedish counterparts. 71 percent of Danes think parents of small children should be allowed to go part time.

Swedish parents are entitled to 480 days parental leave, and eight weeks are earmarked for both the father and the mother. But Denmark is divided – 45 percent want to copy the Swedish model while 44 percent do not.

Swedish foreign policy is also gaining attention, after Margot Wallström in 2014 became the first foreign minister to declare the country was going to adopt a feminist foreign policy.

The Nordic Labour Journal talks to Ann Bernes, the newly appointed ambassador for a feminist foreign policy. When asked what other countries think about this, she refers to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström's usual answer:

"At the beginning there was a certain giggle factor, but this has been replaced with interest and respect."



## Kristin Lund: No shortcuts to gender equality in the armed forces

Major General Kristin Lund from Norway is the UN's first female commander of a peacekeeping force. She believes there will be a female commander-in-chief in one of the Nordic countries within four years.

PORTRAIT

04.03.2016

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL, PHOTO: PATRICK DA SILVA SÆTHER, NTB SCANPIX

“But there are no shortcuts. It takes the same amount of time to become a general or admiral whether you’re a woman or a man,” she says.

On 12 May 2014 the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced that Kristin Lund would be leading the UN peacekeeping force UNFICYP from 13 August that year. He praised Kristin Lund's 34 year long career in the Norwegian armed forces and her international experiences from the UN's peacekeeping mission in Libanon, from Saudi Arabia where she served during Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and at the NATO headquarters for the ISAF force in Afghanistan.



***Was it a coincidence that Cyprus was the first place to get a female commander of one of the UN's peace-keeping missions?***

"I think it was a coincidence that it was Cyprus, since you must wait for a position to become vacant. But there have been female UN soldiers in Cyprus since 1964. UNFICYP has been the largest Swedish operation, with a total of 28.000 Swedish soldiers serving here.

"It was not a coincidence that it was a Scandinavian female commander, however. Scandinavians had female UN soldiers very early on, and not many countries have women who have climbed so high in the hierarchy. There are no shortcuts if you want more female commanders for the UN missions.

"The UN's decision-making bodies are often male-heavy at the top. But 50 percent of the world's population is women and it is important that they too are included in order to achieve comprehensive peace agreements."

***What has been your greatest challenge during your stint as the UNFICYP commander?***

"Militarily this has not been the greatest of challenges, since it has been so peaceful. But everything you do quickly becomes political, and this is a small place. A tiny issue quickly turns into something which ends up on my desk. In the military you differentiate between different levels, like the tactical, operational and strategic level. Here, the differences between those levels has been more fluid. Everything you do is being noticed.

"Personally I have been made very welcome and I only have positive experiences. Apart from me there is one female civilian commander and a senior advisor from Canada who is also a woman. So I am not the only one, because three quarters of the leadership here are women.

"As a woman in the armed forces you are not used to having so many women around you. But all of us female bosses have experienced how to work our way up in male-dominated environments, so we share a lot of the same experiences."

All in all, UNFICYP comprises 1,075 people, some 900 of them are UN soldiers. A total of 45 different countries contribute with military and civilian personnel. Argentina and the UK have the largest numbers of soldiers.



Out of the 900 soldiers, six percent are women. The UN peacekeeping average is 3 percent. The police force UNPOL has 16 percent women, and the average is 10 percent.

***What can you do as a woman that a man cannot do?***

"In certain cultures being a woman means I have access to 100 percent of the population, while a man has only access to 50 percent. That is an important difference. Since we represent the UN, it is also fairly important to reflect what the UN stands for when it comes to issues like gender equality.

"90 percent of the UNFICYP military staff are professional soldiers. We no longer have 'reservists' as we call them, with a different professional background and no connection to a unit. The reservists we do have, come from and have trained with a unit in their home country.

"I think it is a bit of a shame that we don't have more reservists since they have a life experience which can be useful when you work for a peacekeeping mission. Professional soldiers who come to Cyprus after serving in Iraq or Afghanistan need a bit of 'rebalancing'. Conditions here are different."

***Could you give us some examples of situations where you have been forced to intervene?***

"It could be people who illegally go into the buffer zones, for instance to hunt. We also have problems with people trapping migratory birds in nets. Mostly these are isolated cases. We have a very good relationship with the military forces and we usually sort out problems in a good way. But the military leaders on the Greek and Turkish sides never speak directly with each other. Everything goes through us."

***How does geopolitical developments affect the local situation?***

"Anything that happens in the Middle East can have an impact on Cyprus too. Luckily, so far we have had few challenges with refugees, but when Europe closes her borders it

is not hard to envisage refugees turning to Cyprus as an alternative. It is close to countries like Syria both culturally, gastronomically and in terms of weather.

“We are also worried about a terror attack like the ones in Paris or Tunisia. So far it has not happened, but we have had to disarm bombs and you cannot afford to be naive.”

***What do you do to ease the tension?***

“We support various inter-communal events, like football matches between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The car race the Cyprus Rally has also been held for the first time on both the Greek and the Turkish sides. The rally cars even drove through the buffer zone.

“We also play a part during religious events, and we pay attention to what happens in the northern enclaves, where both Greek Cypriots and Maronites live.

***Will Cyprus ever see a peace agreement?***

“I believe there is a chance, but it is up to the people who live here. This is a country which has everything; lovely beaches, arable land and mountains where you can go skiing parts of the year. Young people deserve to grow up in a country without thousands of landmines.”

***How long before there is a female commander-in-chief in a Nordic country?***

“I think there will be a female commander-in-chief in Norway in four years – at least I hope there will be female candidates when a new commander-in-chief is to be appointed. I am too old to apply and very happy with what I have achieved.

“I want to live my life, too, and I have done what I can to prepare the way for women in the armed forces.”



# Commander-in-chief only position of power not yet held by woman

There is only one position of power in the Nordic Labour Journal's gender equality barometer which no woman has ever held in a Nordic country – the commander-in-chief for a country's armed forces. And while women have been absent in war, they have been equally ignored in peace negotiations and peace keeping missions.

INSIGHT

04.03.2016

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL, PHOTO: PRIO

Between 1992 and 2011 less than four percent of people signing peace agreements were women. Less than ten percent of peace negotiators during this same period were women. That's according to statistics from UN Women.

It's been 60 years since the establishment of the first UN peacekeeping mission, but not until 2014 did such a mission get a female commander, when Major General Kristin Lund became the commander for UNFICYP in Cyprus.

But why is such an appointment important? The Nordic Labour Journal asked Torunn L Tryggstad, who has just been appointed Director for the Peace Research Institute Oslo PRIO's Centre on Gender, Peace and Security:

"It is important for many reasons. Symbolically it shows that women as well as men can reach the top, which is also important in terms of young girls having role models," she says.



"Women also bring different experiences than men. But there is not all that much research in this area. Another difference is that women have had limited access to weapons compared to men, and they are more positive to reconciliation processes and cooperation across ethnic, cultural and religious borders."

At PRIO, a core group of four people have been doing research on gender and conflicts for ten years. Yet when the Norwegian government were going to implement the UN resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, it became clear that further research was needed. As a result, a few weeks ago the PRIO Centre on Gender, Peace and Security was established. It has secured several years of funding and will be able to boost research considerably.

***Is there a particular reason why Cyprus got the first female commander?***

"Cyprus might have no such history of its own, but it has been said that the UN wanted a success story. So when it chose a woman for the first time it was to lead a smaller operation with a greater chance of success," says Torunn L Tryggstad.

According to statistics from UN Women, peace agreements involving women have a 20 percent higher chance of lasting for at least two years. The chance for a peace agreement to last for more than 15 years increases with 35 percent.

***But could that not simply be because women are only allowed to take part in the easiest peace negotiations?***

"I must say I am sceptical to those figures and wonder how they have been arrived at methodologically. The probability might be larger, but there is no causality. The number has been blown up politically. But when I give a speech I too

make the point that considering the state of today's world, results are not too good when only men are involved.

"I believe it is mostly about rights, that women should have the same rights to participation, and I am not so fixated on evidence. But if you want to use numbers you must make sure they are correct."

***With the establishment of the Centre for Gender, Peace and Security, what is the first thing you will be focusing on?***

"What we have just been discussing will be important. How important is female participation? Will peace negotiators get better if they are also trained in a gender perspective? We already cooperate with the UN and the Finnish Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) on this. We will monitor the work and see whether it has an effect."

***Is there a dilemma here? To demand that women must be allowed to serve as soldiers and kill other people – is that really feminism?***

"We do not take a stand on this as an institution. But UN resolution 1325 has been championed by many peace movements and pacifist groups which believe you should concentrate on keeping women away from the armed forces. Yet if you look at what 1325 actually says, it also includes the military aspect."

***When will we see a female commander-in-chief in a Nordic country?***

"We have just had a new commander-in-chief in Norway, so it will be a while until the next appointment. But there were several strong female names in the running last time. Perhaps next time a woman will get the position, but this is also about which government will be in power at the time. Social democratic governments are probably the most keen when it comes to such an appointment."

Minister of defence has become a female job in Norway. The current minister, Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide, is number six since Eldbjørg Løwer became the first one in 1999. Sweden has had three, Finland has had two (but after that only men – seven after Anneli Taina). Denmark has only had one and Iceland has no defence minister at all.

"I don't think the recent developments in security policies has much impact on the defence minister position, but there is a development where the commander-in-chief is becoming more important and the defence debate is more coloured by cold war rhetoric. The new security political debates which began emerging in the 90s, focusing on humanitarian security rather than state security, have started to fade.

"Many fear the current unstable security policy situation will lead to a backlash for women, peace and security issues related to this," says Torunn L Tryggestad.

## Female ministers in the Nordic region 1970-2016

Minister	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
PM	1	2	1	4	–
Finance	1	1	1	2	2
Foreign	1	1	2	–	7
Social	20	15	4	9	8
Labour	4	5	–	3	7
Industry	5	1	3	5	2
Justice	6	7	3	13	6
Defence	1	2	–	6	3
Transport	3	8	1	7	6
Agriculture	6	1	–	4	4
Culture	8	6	–	11	6
Education	8	10	3	4	1
Environment	5	3	7	9	7
Total	69	62	25	77	59

If a minister has returned to her post after a break, or has served in a different ministry, it is counted as two ministers.





Sweden's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Margot Wallström

## Defining Sweden's feminist foreign policy

Sweden's feminist government wants to use its foreign policy to promote women's and girl's rights, representation and resources based on the reality in which they live. What exactly a feminist foreign policy means is hard to define, but the perspective should permeate everything the foreign ministry and the diplomatic missions to.

THEME

04.03.2016

TEXT: GUNHILD WALLIN

"So far the feminist foreign policy has shown it can take many different forms, since it always must take into account the situation on the ground," say Ann Bernes, who has been the Swedish government's ambassador for a feminist foreign policy since last autumn.

She provides several examples for how they work. Sweden has for instance started a network which aims to help more women become international mediators, contributed to research on norms for masculinity in the Democratic Republic of Congo and helped Vietnamese girls get an education within the male-dominated occupation disc jockey. The dialogue with women's organisations around the world has also been increased, she says.

"Sweden has also contributed to progress in negotiations on gender equality within the UN and the EU. There is a considerable drive and breadth to what we do," says Ann Bernes.

"The breadth of what we do illustrates that the real feminist foreign policy is not static or ready defined, but a perspective and approach to everything we do. We want to strengthen women's rights, representation and resources by starting with what we call the fourth R: Reality. This means staring with the actual situation on the ground, which could mean many different things in different places," she says.

### Interest replaces the giggle factor

When the Swedish government called itself the world's first feminist government in the autumn of 2014, it gained international attention especially when it came to its foreign policy. Could a feminist foreign policy really be the right way to approach a difficult security situation, critics asked while others praised the initiative. Ann Bernes agrees that there was a giggle factor to begin with, but that this has given space to interest and respect.

"We point out that you cannot achieve peace, security or development if half of society and populations are taken out of the equation, and more and more people are beginning to listen," she says.

It is nothing new that Sweden has a foreign policy which aims to strengthen women's rights. Gender equality and integration has been on the government's foreign policy agenda since the mid-90s. But the main focus has always been on foreign aid and rights. The feminist perspective has been less prominent in other parts of the foreign policy, like foreign and security policies and trade and promotional policies.



"What is happening now is that we are broadening, systemising and deepening the work, and this gives us an extra push forwards, not least what is happening in parallel with the rest of the feminist government's efforts," says Ann Berner.

She points out that there is still much to be done even in Sweden, despite the fact that work to promote gender equality in Sweden has been going on for much longer than in other countries.

### Long road ahead

The relatively newly appointed ambassador is very happy in her work. Days are full to the brim and the to do lists are longer than what her working hours can cover. There has been an action plan for the feminist foreign policy since November 2015, and part of her daily work is now focused on being a coach when the action plan is to be introduced both in the department and to the foreign missions.

Many ambassadors are making contact and want some input for their activities, which also should be coloured by feminism. It might be discussing which challenges in the individual countries are most important to try to influence, and how to best promote women as actors, for instance by including them in visiting programmes or panel debates.

For innumerable women and girls the reality is still marked by discrimination, suppression and structural injustice, says Ann Bernes. She says 128 countries have legislation which limits women's economic independence, and 63 million girls are still not getting an education. And 39,000 girls under 18 are being married every day.

"There have been some progress since the UN's world conference on women in Beijing 25 years ago, but there is still so much to do. That is why the government has declared itself to be a feminist government. It is a way of saying 'enough is enough'," says Ann Bernes.

### Women absent from peace talks

In uneasy, conflict ridden times it is also more important than ever to listen to women's voices in peace negotiations. Today the female half of the population rarely take part when peace is agreed, which could risk weakening the peace and create friction which could lead to more unrest in the future.

The government views this as an important issue, and it is also underlined by researcher Helene Lackenbauer, who has written 'With feminism as a guiding star. Swedish foreign policy in new clothing', which was recently published as part of the Swedish Institute for International Affairs' series 'The daily agenda of world politics'. Helene Lackenbauer works as a political advisor at the Swedish archbishop's office, and was previously leader of research at the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI).

She writes that between 1990 and 2010, 585 peace agreements were signed. 92 contained texts referring to women. Women were referred to in nearly half of the peace talks which were held in 2014.

Industrious work with UN resolution 1325 for women, peace and security, where Sweden has been very active, has given

results. In 2006, Sweden became the first country to adopt an action plan for working with resolution 1325, and now work has started to create a third national action plan based on the same resolution. A main priority is women's participation in peace talks and conflict prevention.

"In many peace talks warring men gather, but large groups are never included in these talks. It is therefore absolutely necessary to promote women. Women are underestimated generally and not least in conflicts. Women might not be represented in public bodies, but they can be active through mobilising their sons or through taking care of the logistics demanded by war. Exposed women give birth to exposed and poor children who might pick up arms in the future," says Helene Lackenbauer.

### **Few surprises**

After summing up what constitutes a feminist foreign policy, there is really nothing that has surprised her.

"From a Swedish perspective there is nothing new really, just classic Swedish politics. What's new is that the foreign policy is now called feminist and that there is an action plan, but such a plan does not necessarily mean things will turn out the way you wish," says Helene Lackenbauer.

So far there has been no definition of what a feminist foreign policy is, and no foreign policy doctrine has been presented from a feminist perspective, she points out, and lists examples of issues she would like to highlight more – not least what feminist politics means to defence and security politics and diplomacy.

What would a feminist foreign policy mean in relationship to Russia, for instance? Would that include increased support for women working for peace in the Baltics or for talks on human rights in the area? She also wants to see a clearer wording on how structures and norms can be influenced within a feminist foreign policy framework.

"By increasing women's power you reduce the power of men, and that has not been addressed. There should be a clearer vision around what you want to achieve," says Helene Lackenbauer.

She thinks Sweden's feminist foreign policy is more important abroad than at home.

"It can give hope and courage in the wider world, even in the West, and give courage to groups who are promoting gender equality. Sweden has also addressed this as an issue within the UN and the EU, which means that civil society knows there is a government which will support them on these issues," says Helene Lackenbauer.

There was a slight decline in the gender barometer 2016. 100 points means full equality between the sexes in the 24 positions of power being measured.

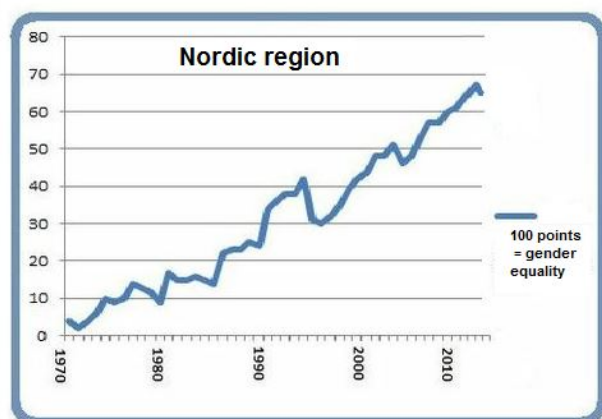
## A slight dip in gender equality in Nordic positions of power

Since last year's barometer there has been a change of government in Finland and in Denmark. Both resulted in governments with fewer female ministers. As a result Nordic gender equality falls by three points to 64 points. Behind the seemingly slight loss, women particularly in Denmark are facing a real setback in the fight for power.

THEME

04.03.2016

TEXT AND GRAPHICS: BJÖRN LINDAHL



This is the sixth year in a row we use our barometer to measure gender equality in 24 positions of power within politics and in the labour market. 100 points shared between the five Nordic countries means full gender equality. We also look all the way back to 1970, the year before the Nordic cooperation began on the ministerial level.

This year the female points were shared like this:

Country	Points 2016	Change
Danmark	11	-3
Finland	5	-2
Iceland	10	+2

Norway	22	0
Sweden	16	0
Nordic region	64	-3

### Denmark with fewer female ministers



When Lars Løkke Rasmussen formed his government on 28 June 2015, it had 17 government ministers. The number of women was remarkably low for a Nordic country – only five, or 29 percent. That is comparable to the outgoing government of Helle Thorning-Schmidt. Six of her 20 ministers were women, which was marginally higher at 30 percent.

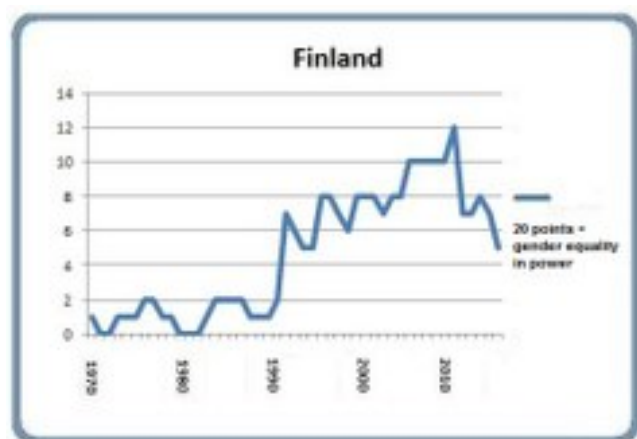
But the comparison is an example of how misleading it can be to use pure maths when studying gender distribution. In Helle Thorning-Schmidt's government, women held some of the most important posts. The Prime Minister was a woman, so too the party leaders for the two coalition partners, the Socialist People's Party (SF) and the Danish Social-Liberal Party who also served as government ministers.

Anette Wilhelmsen from SF was Minister for Social Affairs, while Margrethe Vestager from the Social-Liberal Party was Minister of Economic Affairs before leaving the government to become an EU commissioner.

Lars Løkke Rasmussen's government only has two women in the ministries we look at: Karen Elleman is minister for Social Affairs, while the Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Eva Kjer Hansen, is stepping down after the opposition threatened her with a vote of no confidence. She was replaced on 29 February by Esben Lunde Larsen, the former Minister for Education. Ulla Tørnæs took over his position.

The only thing which saves Denmark from a severe setback for gender equality in positions of power is that the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) has elected its first female leader. That is worth four points, and together with the President of the Confederation of Professionals in Denmark, Bente Sorgenfrey (two points), the two government ministers and Queen Margrethe as head of state (three points), Denmark gets 11 points this year, three points down on 2015.

### Finland from bad to worse

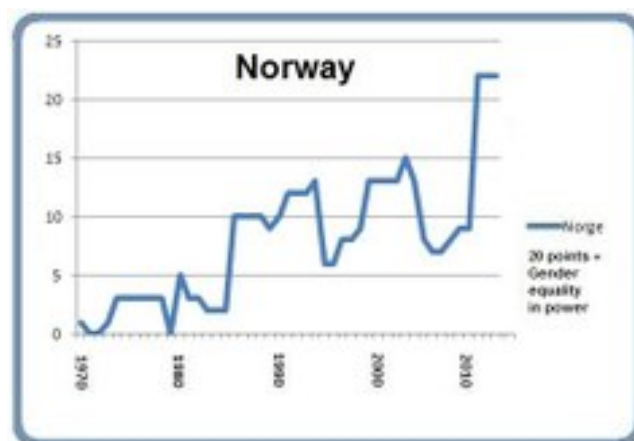


Juha Sipilä from the Finnish Center Party formed his government one month earlier than the one in Denmark, on 29 May 2015. It only has 14 government ministers, four of whom are women – 35 percent. That is more than in Denmark, but far from what his party colleague Matti Vanhanen's second government after the 2007 elections had. It beat the world record with eight in twelve ministers being women, or 60 percent.

Juha Sipilä has three women in the posts which we measure: Minister of Social Affairs Hanna Mäntylä, Minister of Transport and Communications Anne Berner and Sanni Grahn-Laasonen who is Minister of Education and Culture, a twin role which gives her two points.

Pauliine Koskela is President of Finland's Supreme Court. All in all Finland only gets five points in our gender equality barometer, down two points. That is a new bottom ranking.

### Norway still a clear number one



In 2014, Norway became the first country where women reached full gender equality within the 24 positions of power which we measure, with 22 out of 40 possible points for one country. Norway kept that position with an equal number of points in 2015. This comes as a result of a combination of a large number of positions held by women and the importance of those positions. Here too the party leaders, Erna Solberg and Siv Jensen, hold government positions – the top ones at that: Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

Another woman entered government after a reshuffle last October, when Anniken Hauglie replaced Robert Eriksson as Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion. As a result, all the social partners' top people are women.

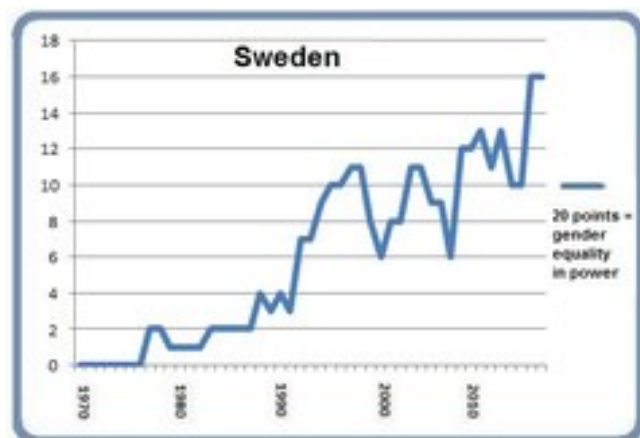
The women lost one point in the government since the post as Minister of Climate and Environment went from a woman to a man, while Sylvi Listhaug moved from the job as Minister of Agriculture and Food to the newly established post as Minister of Migration and Integration. That meant the Minister of Justice, Anders Anundsen, was freed from some of his tasks, but the Minister of Migration and Integration does not figure in our gender equality barometre. There are also no points for the new Minister of EEA and EU Affairs, but in total women won positions.

In addition the new Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Norway, Toril Marie Øie, is a woman. She started in her job on 1 March, just one week before International Women's



Day. This also means that Norway gets 22 points, same as the year before.

### Swedish politics in stormy seas



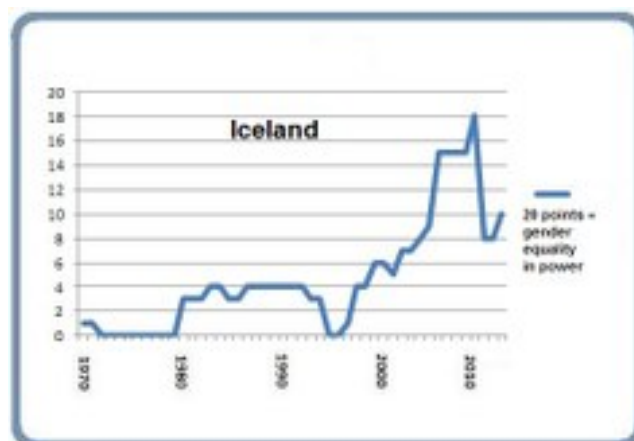
There has been far more focus on integration lately in Sweden too. Minister for Employment Ylva Johansson is responsible for this area, yet Prime Minister Stefan Löfven does not want to go as far as calling her a minister for integration. That is probably out of consideration for the Green Party, which used to be responsible for such issues.

“Ylva Johansson becomes ‘Minister for Integration’ and steps forward as a possible successor to Stefan Löfven. The world’s smallest government reshuffle is both a step back for the Social Democrats – and a loss of power for the Greens,” commented Göran Eriksson from the daily Svenska Dagbladet.

There are no other changes which impact on the gender equality barometer, and as a result Sweden gets the same number of points as last year, 16. But Swedish politics has been in stormy waters too, and it has mostly centred on Minister of Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström.

In January the tabloid Aftonbladet disclosed that she had been allowed to hire a flat from Kommunal, the Swedish Municipal Workers’ Union, which allowed her to bypass a queue which normally means eight years on a waiting list. Meanwhile the spotlight also landed on Kommunal because the trade union’s restaurant and hotel business had lost 320 million kronor (€34m) since 2002. As a result, the female head Anneli Nordström announced she would be stepping down in May.

### Presidential election in Iceland



Iceland has not seen any changes which affect the points in the gender equality barometer in the government. But on 22 April 2015, Þórunn Sveinbjarnardóttir became President of the Icelandic Association of Academics (BHM), after the position for a short while had been temporarily filled by a male president. That gives Iceland 2 extra points, a total of 10.

But in his new year’s speech, President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson announced he would be retiring on 1 August. There have been only five presidents in Iceland since the country gained independence in 1944, and Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson has held office for the longest, more than 19 years. The presidential election will be held on 25 June, and four candidates have put themselves forward, among them a woman – the author Elísabet Jökulsdóttir.



# Finnish government seeks help to find work for more people

The Finnish government has asked citizens and organisation for their help to reduce unemployment figures. In particular, Prime Minister Juha Sipilä and his government ministers want ideas for how to help people who have a weak position in the labour market.

NEWS

04.03.2016

TEXT: CARL-GUSTAV LINDÉN

This is an attempt to gather new ideas from civic organisations, companies, trade unions, schools, municipalities, researchers and others with practical experiences of how to help unemployed people. A first look at the answers shows the government is getting the help it has been asking for.

The Minister of Local Government and Public Reforms, Anu Vehviläinen, and the Minister of Labour, Jari Lindström, jointly came up with the idea to carry out a small experiment: what happens if the government asks people who have their own experiences to come up with suggestions for reform? The government has embraced a culture of experimentation in order to find new ways of reaching political decisions.

## Hundreds of answers

Former member of parliament Maria Kaisa Aula was asked to gather the proposals, which she did by using an online poll. She collects the best ideas for the government to consider, before it can develop them into political measures.

Aula also maps different people's opinions of measures which would make it easier for employers to hire unemployed people, or which could better help the unemployed finding work or starting their own business.

"We received more than 600 suggestions and I have also received many initiatives via email. Some answers describe problems and people's own experiences of things that do not work," Aula told the NLJ.

Last autumn, Minister of Labour Jari Lindström told the NLJ he had been told by many in the field that the way unemployed people were met by the authorities was not coordinated, that people were sent from place to place in a system which was not efficient. Lindström's criticism of this bureaucracy finds support in the answers which have come in.

Maria Kaisa Aula says there are complaints about sector divisions, about specialists who don't talk to one another and information which is not being shared. This does not concern only labour services, but also rehabilitation, social services, education and unemployment benefit systems. Earlier Aula was Finland's ombudsman for children, and she sees parallels with child and family protection where clients also have not been met in a coordinated way.

"The experts fail to cooperate, clients aren't given preventative help and support arrives too late."

## Focusing on the weak

The survey's main focus is on people who have a weak position in the labour market; young people, immigrants, people with reduced work capacity, the long term unemployed and older people. Because the Sipilä's government has had to make cuts to the funding of employment measures, there is an increased need to find new ways of helping these groups of people into the labour market. When it comes to unemployed people with higher education and academics, the government hopes to receive suggestions of how they can create their own jobs.

The intention is to develop various types of employment measures on a local, regional or national level. The NLJ will return to this issue to examine how the suggestions are being turned into political and administrative action.

## Aiming to increase employment rates

The inquiry supports the government's programme which deals with reforms aimed at increasing the employment rate and improving the management of the labour force. The hope is that the country's competitiveness can be improved through creating more jobs and entrepreneurship, a more versatile economic structure and a strong public economy.

The government wants to renew unemployment protection, eliminate unemployment traps, develop a model for active social protection, get more people with reduced work capacity into work and to further develop the youth guarantee.

The government's stated aim is to increase the employment rate to 72 percent – up from 66.8 in January 2016, and to increase the number of people in work with 110.000 people during this government. Since the government came to power in 2015, there has been a downward trend.

# Three Swedish initiatives for increased gender equality

It calls itself ‘the world’s first feminist government’, and with three new initiatives the Swedish government shows it is living up to the name: A more equal occupational injury insurance system, a review of parental benefits to ensure it creates a more equal situation for both parents and finally there will be a strengthening of the discrimination act.

NEWS

04.03.2016

TEXT: KERSTIN AHLBERG, EDITOR EU & ARBETSRÄTT

The problem with Sweden’s occupational injury insurance is that women who seek compensation as a result of workplace accidents are far less likely to succeed than men. According to the terms of reference to a commission appointed by the government in January, the differences stem from the fact that women and men to a large extent work in different occupations, and that there are more acknowledged occupational injuries in the male-dominated parts of the labour market.

## **Not enough research**

This could in turn be because work environment research into female-dominated sectors and the types of illnesses women report as occupational injuries is less developed. For an employee to get compensation the injury must in all probability be a result of an injurious action at the workplace. It is also more difficult to prove that an illness has been caused by a person’s work than to establish that an injury was caused by a workplace accident – which happens more often to men than women.

In order to make the insurance more gender neutral, the government authority responsible (Försäkringskassan), which decides whether an illness should be recognised as an occupational injury, needs more knowledge of what impact the work environment has in terms of various illnesses. The new commission is tasked with coming up with proposals for how this can be addressed.

## **Problem on its head**

When it comes to parental benefits and parental leave, the issue is turned on its head; more women than men make use of it. As a result, women’s wages rise slower, they have fewer career opportunities, a higher rate of sick leave and a lower general income. This in turn has major consequences for women’s pensions. That is why the government has asked

for an investigation into measures which will make parents share parental leave and parental pay more equally.

This will include looking into whether to introduce more so-called daddy months, which would mean a period of parental leave which the parents cannot share, but which will be lost if the father does not use it.

## **New discrimination act**

The government’s plans have advanced the furthest when it comes to the discrimination act. Proposed legislation was introduced in early February. It will tighten up rules on how employers identify discriminating wage differences. In future they must present an annual salary survey in order to discover and eliminate wage differences and other employment conditions which discriminate between women and men.

This means a return to the system which existed before the former centre-right government came to power in 2006. It felt salary surveys only needed to be presented every third year, and changed the gender equality act in order to ease the employers’ administrative burden.

However, the current government feels there are more benefits than disadvantages to more frequent salary surveys.

## **Easier after a while**

This means stronger protection for the individual worker, because differences will show up and can be rectified faster. The government admits that this could mean a lot of work for the employers the first time they carry out a salary survey, but it argues that it will become easier as employers learn how to do it and get into a routine. By waiting three years, you risk losing that knowledge and the employer must start from scratch every time. But if the salary survey is updated annually, the time and effort required to do it will be limited, the government says.





## I am incredibly thankful for part time work!

35 year old Cecilie Enevold has gone part time in order to spend more time with her two small children. That was a difficult but correct decision, she says.

NEWS

03.03.2016

TEXT: MARIE PREISLER, PHOTO: LARS BERTELSEN

Cecilie Enevold loves her work as a TV producer, and worked far more than full time when she became pregnant. Her plan was to return to full time work as soon as possible after the birth. But her priorities very much changed when she became a mother .

“When I became pregnant I was sure that I would quickly return to my full time position soon after the birth. I did not consider myself to be someone who puts her career on hold for her children, but when my son Harald was five months old, and I had a job offer, I didn’t feel like leaving him in a nursery after all,” says Cecilie Enevold.

She worked as a freelancer for a major TV company and had many tasks, but she made a drastic decision: She said no thank you to all job offers while Harald was little. In Copen-

hagen, where she lives with her partner, the municipality at that time gave a small incentive to new parents who chose to stay at home to look after their child, because there was a lack of municipal nursery spaces. Cecilie Enevold accepted the offer and enjoyed it, even as people around her questioned her decision:

“There was pressure from outside. I felt that some people found it strange. But it was also very much a case of me myself having to learn how to come to terms with a decision which went against the grain.”

Cecilie Enevold discovered that being a mother meant she had to spend more time at home than a full time job would allow. She decided to look for a part time job, and after a time receiving benefits she found her current job in a TV produc-

tion company. She works 22.5 hours a week, over three working days. Part time work suits her and her family perfectly:

“It is the ideal solution for me. I look forward to going to work and feel vigorous while I’m there because I also have enough time for my children.”

Eight months ago she gave birth to her second son, Vilhelm. Like his big brother, he will be looked after at home until he is around 18 months old. That is the earliest point at which Cecilie Enevold will return to her part time job.

“I want to be home with my children for as long as possible, so when my maternal leave ends I take six months leave without pay, while we live off my partner’s wages.”

She underlines several times that she is very aware that she is privileged, and that not everyone can afford to work part time. But it has meant some tough choices for her and her family too. There is less money for travel and clothes, and the family has not bought an expensive property.

Long parental leave and part time should be an opportunity offered to all, she thinks, and also believes this would be a benefit to employers too.

“I am an even better labourer when I work part time, because I am even more efficient and rested. And being a mother has given me many skills which also benefit my workplace. I can for instance juggle even more things than before.”

She is not worried that her choice of putting children before career will impact on her job and career opportunities in the long run:

“I’ll be fine.”

Also read: Danish parents want Swedish part time conditions





## Danish parents want Swedish part time conditions

The Danish gender equality debate is on fire. A large majority of Danes think parents of small children should have a right to work part time, but the trade unions, the government and feminists disagree.

NEWS

03.03.2016

TEXT: MARIE PREISLER, PHOTO: LARS BERTELSEN

The Danish gender equality debate has caught fire and has become sharper in the wake of a recent article in a national weekly, where a well-educated mother said she chose to quit her full time job. Now she only works ten hours a week in order to have the freedom to fetch her four year old daughter early from nursery.

Her story gave rise to a heated media debate about her choice, and about whether parents of small children should be given the same rights as Swedish parents who have the right to go part time while the children are small. Yes, think nearly three in four Danes. No, says the government, trade union movement and feminists, while disagreeing on the reason why part time work is a bad idea.

In a European context quite a few Danes work part time, according to numbers from Statistics Denmark, but they are dependent on the acceptance from the employer, and that is not good enough for today's busy families, argue many Danes. Seven in ten want to give parents the legal right to go part time, like the case is in Sweden, where parents of children younger than eight have had the right to go part time if they want to since 1995.

### **A no from the government**

According to an opinion poll commissioned by the trade magazine of the Danish Association of Masters and PhDs, 71 percent of Danes agree or largely agree that parents of young children should have the right to go part time. Only 10 per-

cent disagree while 13 percent largely disagree that part time work should be a right when you have younger children. The magazine also asked whether Danes want nurseries to extend their opening hours. 68 percent answered yes.

This desire for part time work is not being welcomed by the government. Both the Minister for Employment Jørn Neergaard Larsen (the Liberal Party) and his party colleague, the Minister for Children, Education and Gender Equality Ellen Trane Nørby, have made it abundantly clear that they will not work to give families a right to shorter working hours. Working hours are already down, so more part time is simply not something the Danish society can afford, they argue, and say they want to improve public child care instead, making sure opening hours match parents' working hours.

"We have created a labour market where parents can choose the hours they want to work. And we see that a few too many of them choose to go part time, in my opinion," Jørn Neergaard Larsen said earlier.

He has also made it clear that he does not think Danish parents of younger children work particularly hard compared to those in many other countries. 35 percent of Danish female employees worked part time last year. That figure is far too high, according to the Ministry of Employment.

### **Happy with differences**

The government's attitude is poor, wrong and dangerous both for individuals and for society as a whole, argue families with children, but their desire for more part time work is also met with resistance from trade unions and feminists. Part time is bad for gender equality, they argue, saying it is typically women who choose to work reduced hours, and as a result in older age women get lower pensions than men.

As a rule there is equal pay for equal work in Denmark, except for an inexplicable wage difference of four and seven percent. But gender divisions within the labour market are very clear. More women work in the public sector where wages are generally lower than in the private sector, where more men work.

Trade unions also worry if more people go part time, full time colleagues will be expected to solve more tasks. They are also fighting to secure members who work part time the right to get full time employment.

Surveys show that Danish parents are happy with women working more part time than men, and there is also a marked tendency that women are the ones staying at home with the youngest children. Danish parents can share 32 weeks of paid parental leave, yet women usually take most of it. The former centre-left government wanted to make it compulsory for men to take at least three months of the paid leave, or lose it altogether. But they backed out of that proposal.

Also read: I am incredibly thankful for part time work!

# New Swedish work environment strategy: No more fatal work accidents

The Swedish government wants a vision zero for fatal work accidents, a sustainable labour market and measures to improve the psychosocial work environment. The government recently presented its work environment strategy for 2016 to 2020.

NEWS

02.03.2016

TEXT: GUNHILD WALLIN, PHOTO: THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

The government's new work environment strategy comes as a response to recent years' increase in work-related illnesses, especially psychiatric diagnosis. It is this development the government now hopes to reverse with its three focus areas, but also through two inquiries.

One will look at which work environment rules are needed in the modern labour market. The other will be used to create a basis for a national centre of work environment expertise.

"We were missing the National Institute for Working Life", Sweden's Minister for Employment Ylva Johansson told the press during the strategy launch, referring to the centre-right government's decision to close the Institute in 2007.

"I believe there is a link between increasing sick leave and the severe cuts to work environment initiatives imposed by the former government. In 2007 the Swedish Work Environment Authority faced cuts and the National Institute for Working Life was axed," she said.

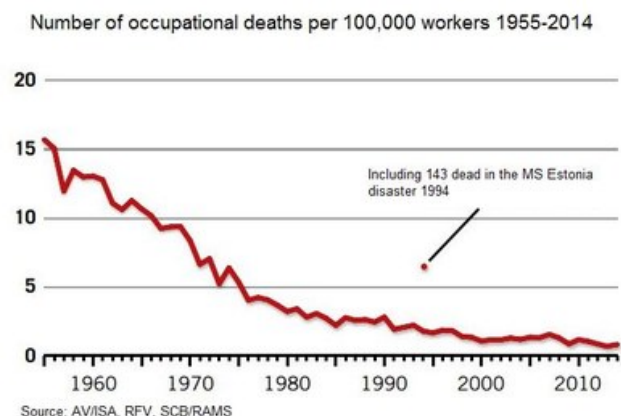
Work on the new work environment strategy has been going on since 2015 and is carried out in cooperation with the social partners. It involves seminars and meetings with various experts. Work environment issues have been a priority for the centre-left government since it came to power in 2014, and it has set aside 100 million kronor (€10.7m) every year for work environment issues, which includes more funds allocated to the Work Environment Authority, regional safety officers and occupational health.

The government has also allocated 55 million kronor (€5.9m) to more labour market research.

## A vision zero for fatal accidents

In the coming years the government will shape its work environment policies based on three main focus areas. One of

them is a vision zero for fatal accidents and preventative measures to achieve this.



*Fatal work accidents are far less frequent than they use to be*

The number of fatal work accidents has indeed been halved in the past 25 years, but still there is nearly one workplace death every week. Most at risk are people in the construction, manufacturing, transport, agriculture and forestry sectors. The Minister for Employment believes the only aim must be a vision zero.

"It is horrible and unacceptable that people lose their lives at work," said Ylva Johansson.

## A sustainable labour market

The second focus area is a sustainable labour market. In the report 'Work Environments 2013' 14 percent of employees between 50 and 64 said they did not think they would man-

age to work until pensionable age. But young people are also struggling in today's labour market. It can be hard to gain access, simply securing a job. The number of unskilled workers has dropped from some 50 percent of the labour force to 10 percent today.

This means a labour market with increasing demands while the skills base has not always kept pace with the development. Many young people also have jobs which involve heavy lifting and stress, for instance in the restaurant trade.

Another issue for the sustainable labour market initiative is new technology which for many workers means disruptions to their work/life balance. The types of employment are also undergoing major change. The sharing economy creates new ways of working, many are working as sole traders or as part of a supply chain, while others are dependent on staffing agencies. There are also many foreign companies, which might not be as au fait with Swedish regulations.

"We will look at other ways of organising work than what we are used to. Do the changes mean we have to adapt existing legislation and rules? When the labour market changes we also need to change how we handle the work environment," said Ylva Johansson.

### **The psychosocial work environment**

The psychosocial work environment is the third focus area. Since 2010 sick leave has increased with 75 percent. Two thirds of the people on that statistic are women, and the massive increase is due to stress and other psychological ailments. Many of the victims are women of childbearing age. One reason is more domestic work, but also a challenging work environment.

One particular area of concern is the fact that sick leave is becoming more prevalent among younger people. So-called contract jobs are judged to be particularly straining: Assistant nurses in elderly care, social workers, nursers dealing with people in crisis.

"These are people who are needed in our welfare society, not in our social benefit systems. If this development is not halted, we will have 70,000 more people on sick leave by 2020. That would cost 14 billion kronor (€1.5bn) in sickness benefits alone, and it would be a tragedy for individual workers, employers and the society as a whole," said the Minister for Social Security Annika Strandhäll, who also attended the media seminar.

How will the new work environment strategy change things? One path is increased knowledge about the new labour market and work environments. The aim is also to create a new forum for dialogue between the social partners, the Swedish Work Environment Authority and the Ministry of Employment.

"There is a lack of knowledge today and this is one piece of the jigsaw which the government can help put it place. We know that in areas where a systematic work environment focus has been applied, things run pretty smoothly. This is also where you often find close cooperation between the social partners and with occupational health. My ambition is to see to it that a larger part of the Swedish labour market will apply a systematic work environment focus. This should be carried by the social partners, but with help from the authorities," said Ylva Johansson.



Iceland's work with gender equality has gained international attention. The Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (right) visited Iceland in 2015. On the left: Guðný Einarsdóttir from ASÍ

# Iceland's Confederation of Labour turns 100 in a more equal labour market

ASÍ - the Icelandic Confederation of Labour - is 100 years old this year. The anniversary is being celebrated with music and conferences in four different locations in Iceland in March. During this anniversary year one authority, one organisation or one company will probably be certified for Iceland's new equal wage standard.

## NEWS

28.02.2016

TEXT: GUÐRÚN HELGA SIGURÐARDÓTTIR, PHOTO: PRIVATE

Iceland has spent years developing a certified wage standard to guarantee complete gender equality when it comes to salaries. The work is nearing its end. More than 20 authorities, organisations and companies are spearheading the preparation of the certification. Several of them have reached a stage where it is soon time for an evaluation which will lead to the final rubber-stamping of the standard.

"The authorities are holding back, because an evaluation is costly. They want to be absolutely sure that the certified wage standard will be approved before requesting an evaluation," explains Guðný Einarsdóttir at the Icelandic Ministry of Finance.

"But I am hopeful that two authorities will be requesting and evaluation this year," she continues.

The National Land Service of Iceland is one of the authorities which is ready for an evaluation. Their head of human resources, Jónína Valdimarsdóttir, says the land service continuously works with wage issues in a professional manner and is waiting for a chance to be evaluated. She hopes this will happen as soon as possible.

### Business Iceland to introduce the standard

SA Business Iceland was originally behind the initiative to create the certified wage standard and has pushed for its development. SA has now decided to adopt it. Director General Hannes Sigurðsson hopes the organisation is ready to be evaluated within a year.

"You need to satisfy many different requirements when it comes to working procedures before you are ready to be evaluated. We are not quite there yet, but later this year I will

know more about how this will pan out," says Hannes Sigurðsson.

It has not been easy to develop the certified wage standard. It is a tool box with strict rules for procedures and working methods, for example the documentation of working procedures which you need to introduce and follow.

"I don't know whether we will be the first organisation to be evaluated, but we try to push things forward in order to make this happen quite soon," says Hannes.

ASÍ also aims to introduce the standard to their offices. ASÍ's Director General Guðrún Ágústa Guðmundsdóttir feels it is an important and exciting project. She hopes companies, authorities and municipalities will introduce the standard as soon as possible.

The National and University Library of Iceland, Landsbókasafn Íslands – Háskólabókasafn, has also worked towards introducing the certified wage standard. The library has had an employment evaluation system for some time, to make sure it adheres to all wage demands.

But the evaluation is expensive. The head of finance, Edda G. Björgvinsdóttir, is not sure whether it is worth going through an evaluation. She says this is something the national library's management is considering right now.

### A tool against discrimination

Iceland's new certified wage standard has had a lot of international attention. Guðný Einarsdóttir says foreign visitors are curious; they would like to know how far preparations have come and how things are being done.

The Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, visited Iceland in April 2015. Guðný says she was fascinated.

“Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka put pressure on us. She wants us to finalise the standard as soon as possible and to start exporting it,” says Guðný.

The certified wage standard is an important tool in the fight against gender pay gaps in the labour market. The gap will narrow in line with the number of workplaces which adapt the standard, goes the argument. The aim is to get rid of gender pay gaps altogether by 2022, according to Iceland's Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson.

But the certified wage standard also works well in the fight against general discrimination. Guðný Einarsdóttir believes it will be a fantastic tool to fight all kinds of discrimination.

“Companies and authorities which use the certification will not be discriminating people based on their backgrounds, sexuality or other things,” says Guðný.