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25 per cent of Norwegian workers say they have lost influence

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## Theme: Nordic gender equality



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# It is time to get women on board again

The number of female state leaders is falling. In rapid succession, New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced their retirements.

EDITORIAL

27.02.2023

BY BJÖRN LINDAHL, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Although Sturgeon could not call herself the leader of an independent country, she and Ardern were two clear voices on a world stage which no longer has an equivalent to Angela Merkel.

The EU Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, topped Forbes' list of the world's most powerful women in 2022. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni came seventh.

Only 13 of the 192 countries in the UN are run by women. Danish Mette Frederiksen is down at number 74 and Finland's Sanna Marin is number 83 on Forbes' list. Katrín Jakobsdóttir did not even make the list, which is coloured by an American view of what are the critical positions of power.

The Nordic Labour Journal's gender equality barometer looks at 24 positions of power in each of the Nordic countries. This is a humble project that aims to produce a comprehensive picture of how many women there are in Nordic governments, the labour market organisations and in six symbolically important positions.

This year the curve points sharply downward. It looks like women will get only 75 points, down from 92 last year. We measure the situation as it is on 8 March. Is this just coincidence, like the fact that after Sweden's change of government, the government ministries we measure are now mostly led by men?

Do we put too much emphasis on who heads the trade union confederations in the different countries? All surveys have their weak points, but by steadfastly asking the same question every year it is also possible to highlight things that would not otherwise be noticed. Like the fact that Denmark got its first female national police commissioner in 2022 – at least for a couple of months.

We write about another barometer too in this issue – the Norwegian joint decision-making barometer. The annual survey asks 4,600 workers whether they feel they have got more or less say in their working life in the past year. This

year, one in four workers answered they have been given less say, and this is particularly true for the public sector.

It is one thing to map how power is divided and another to do something about it. If you want a gender-equal society, it is a good starting point to make sure men and women study for different occupations within different disciplines.

“If you want to help save the world, science is one way to go,” says Sunniva Johanne Rose.

She is a blogger and nuclear physicist and a speaker at one of many events taking place across Norway as part of the “Girls and technology” project which aims to get more women to study sciences.

Sunniva Johanne Rose's message is that it should be possible to be interested in pink lipstick and science at the same time.

Education is not all that is needed, however. Because why are there so few female entrepreneurs? We meet Danish Hanne Jarmer, who like Rose is a role model in her field. She invented a way of training dogs who are home alone, sad and bored.

If surveys about power have taught us anything, it is that in order to gain influence you need to get organised. Anette Steenberg is CEO of Medicon Valley Alliances, which helps bring companies working with life sciences together in the Öresund region. It is not enough with just a bridge – you need other measures too.

The *Tur - Retur* project has an opposite starting point. In Finland, and in particular among the Swedish-speaking Finns in Ostrobothnia, there is a strong tradition for migration. The threshold has always been low for moving to Sweden, which is seen as a home market.

Yet project leader Linda Granback does not settle with trying to make it easier for Swedish-speaking Finns to return home. Why not tempt Swedes to move to Finland also?



## Female entrepreneur, CEO and role model

Hanne Jarmer is the inventor of a wall-mounted robot that exercises dogs' brains. She is also a role model for female entrepreneurs who generally find it far harder than men to attract investors.

THEME

27.02.2023

TEXT: MARIE PREISLER, PHOTO: GO DOGO

Hanne Jarmer can thank her two dogs for becoming an entrepreneur. They needed good stimulation every day, especially when left alone at home while she worked as head of department at the Technical University of Denmark, DTU. This challenge made Hanne Jarmer think hard about how she could keep her dogs healthy and happy.

“One morning I was with my two dogs, I had the idea of combining hardware and software to make a robot that could give the dogs little tasks to solve in order to be rewarded with treats. I wanted to give my spoilt dogs tasks so they did not simply empty their food bowl before spending the rest of the day on the sofa.”

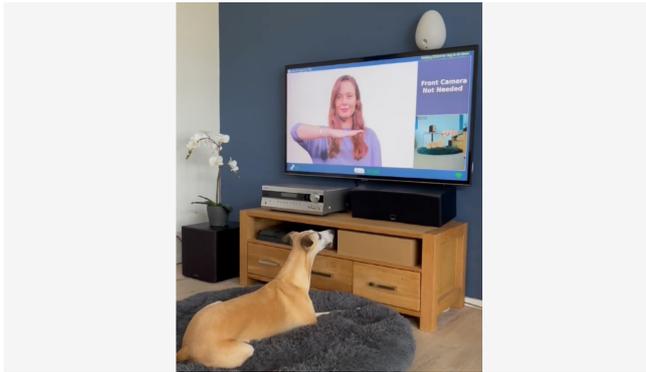
She immediately started investigating whether this was a unique idea, and to her joy, she could conclude that nobody so far appeared to have had the same idea as her.

It took her nearly five years from idea to production and the first sales. Today she is the CEO of Go Dogo, a company with six employees plus the canine game testers Lous, Leo and Falka, who are also models for the company's marketing department.

### Special investor codes

The invention is based on technologies like machine learning and game development combined with dog psychology. In

practical terms, it is a robot in the shape and size of an ostrich egg which is linked to the internet and your TV.



The robot “spits” treats when its built-in video function detects that the dog has performed certain tasks – for instance sitting, lying down or standing up. There are eight levels, and the dog gradually learns what to do in order to release a treat.

Each time a new trick is introduced, the dog is first rewarded just for waiting for increasing periods of time, up to three minutes.

“This is a good waiting game, but if the dog gets a bit tired and sits or lies down – which most dogs do every so often – it is immediately rewarded with a ‘Good boy!’ and a treat. So the dog quite quickly finds out how it can avoid waiting and it is ready for the next level and a new challenge,” explains Hanne Jarmer.

Unlike with other products on the market, with Go Dogo, there is no need for the dogs to have physical contact with the machine in order to release a treat.

“This removes the risk of a keen, hungry or frustrated dog starting to gnaw on the machine, which can lead to the dog damaging their nose or paws or swallowing splinters,” says Hanne Jarmer.

She has needed to raise capital from several sources in order to develop and produce Go Dogo. Hanne Jarmer is a trained chemical engineer and believes the fact that she has always worked in male-dominated sectors has helped her in her dialogue with investors.



*To create a mental workout for dogs, you need investment capital.*

“Securing capital as an entrepreneur can be an uphill battle if you don’t know the investors’ unwritten rules and codes. It can be even harder as a woman because the majority of investors are men. Personally, I think I have had a small advantage as a woman because I have always been used to navigating professional projects with a majority of male colleagues.”

### **Aiming for gender balance**

When Hanne Jarmer wrote her PhD thesis, she was the only woman among 20 academics, and other students and lecturers were also predominantly male. Now she has created a company where there is a gender balance both among staff and in the leadership, something she is very pleased about.

“I feel that having gender balance has a positive effect both on the wellbeing of staff and the company’s results.”

On the investor side, there is no gender balance, however. Only four of Go Dogo’s 20 investors are women. And Hanne Jarmer is the only woman among Go Dogo’s founders. Her three co-founders are all younger men who she got to know while studying at DTU, and who have been part of the team developing Go Dogo.

Hanne Jarmer is one of the female entrepreneurs that the Danish Chamber of Commerce highlights in their 2022 report “25 female entrepreneurs you should know”. It focuses on how Denmark and the other Nordic countries could promote more female entrepreneurs.

### **Nordic region lags behind**

Both Denmark, Sweden and Norway lag behind the OECD average of new, female entrepreneurs, the report says. Far fewer women than men become entrepreneurs. For every 10 male entrepreneurs, only six women in Denmark, five in Sweden and just four in Norway become entrepreneurs.

The report also shows that female entrepreneurs face obstacles more often than men when trying to raise capital for their companies. Just 1.5 per cent of investments in Danish startups go to all-female startups. One of the reasons could be that many venture capital firms have very few women partners. Four in five European venture capital firms have only male partners, and Danish ‘business angels’ invest 90 per cent of their capital in all-male startups.



*Go Dogo has equal gender representation in their workforce and on the board.*

The Danish Chamber of Commerce wants to end this disparity, and also works to increase the number of female board members. The Chamber's own board welcomed Mia Wagner in 2022. She is a former participant in the well-known pitch and invest TV series 'The Dragon's Den'. She is the co-founder of Nordic Female Founders, which works to promote more female entrepreneurs by investing in startups with a diverse gender mix.

### **A need for role models**

One explanation for the low number of female entrepreneurs, according to the Chamber of Commerce's report, is that fewer than one in six Danish entrepreneurs have a female role model. The number of female entrepreneurs who name a female role model is rising though, and it is a development that pleases Hanne Jarmer.

"Role models are incredibly important. When girls and women meet someone from their own gender who dared to become entrepreneurs, it becomes infectious."

That is also why it is important to choose the right examples of entrepreneurship to present in primary and secondary schools and later on, she thinks.

"Show the girls how entrepreneurs can create something that makes a difference for someone."

Hanne Jarmer's vision is for Go Dogo to become a large international business and to use the technology for a range of applications in the future – including online veterinary services for dogs and training dogs to tolerate loud noises like fireworks and thunder. She will also not rule out developing Go Dogo to activate indoor cats too, although cats have less of a need for activation and generally are harder to activate than dogs.

"The great breakthrough is within reach now, as the robot's last teething problems are nearly cured," she says.



## Norwegian nuclear physicist: make space for pink in science

Sunniva Johanne Rose is a physicist and blogger. She is good at sciences but also loves shoes, makeup, interior design and fashion. During her academic career, she has faced much prejudice against women in pink.

### THEME

27.02.2023

TEXT AND PHOTO: LINE SCHEISTRØEN

As a child, she dreamt about a life in ballerina shoes and a pink tutu. She loved dancing and she loved the colour pink. Rose wanted to be a ballerina.

When she got a bit older, she got close to fulfilling her dream but then the scientist in her awoke. Because Rose also loved sciences – mathematics and physics. Could this be an alternative professional route?

She finally settled on sciences but carried on dancing as a hobby. She still loved pink, nice clothes, high-heeled shoes and makeup. Rose was a pink “babe”.

### Academic journey

Physicist and blogger Sunniva Rose was one of the women who talked about their academic journey during “Girls and technology – inspiration day 2023” organised by OsloMet, The University of Oslo and NHO – the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise.

Similar events were held at many Norwegian universities and higher educational institutions on 15 February this year.



Veronica Killi and Mathilde Ingeborg Nilsen Verne showed why it is important to have some fun while studying and at work. They served up an action-packed chemistry show.

"Jenter og teknologi" (Girls and technology) is a national recruitment project aiming to increase the number of women who choose to study science and technology. The project is run by NHO.

Norway still has a gender-segregated labour market, and young people still choose educations and careers typical for their gender. This is particularly evident in vocational and apprenticeship training.

At the same time, there is a serious skills shortage, especially in technology. Nearly half of the companies in NHO's latest skills barometer say they lack sufficient ICT competence.

### Dealing with prejudice

Rose told the event in Oslo that for many years she experienced that it was not OK to be "pink" and that she felt ostracised because she spent time and effort on what many around her considered to be "superficial things".

When she started to struggle a bit academically at university, she began to doubt herself:

"Perhaps they are right? Perhaps I am actually a little bit stupid?"

She began to wonder whether she was actually fit to study science and whether there perhaps was not space for people like her who arrived to lectures and reading rooms in high heels with a handbag full of pink lip gloss while teaching dance in her spare time.

She explained how she, during a lecture, pointed out that the lecturer had made a mistake and a fellow student shouted: "But Sunniva, you are not stupid after all!"

She has also heard comments like "There are no blonde nuclear physicists".

### Got her PhD.

But Rose got a top-grade master's degree. She secured a position as a PhD student, and today she works as a nuclear physicist with a PhD. in how to use Thorium as nuclear fuel.

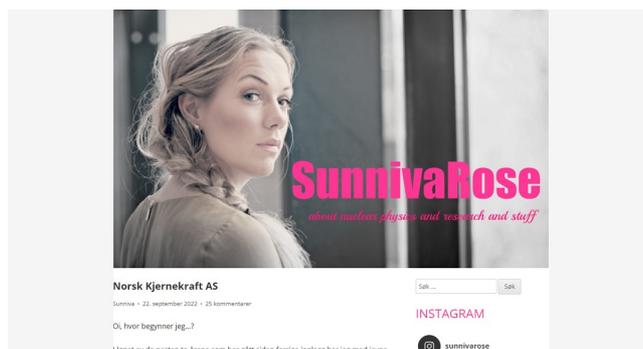
She is head of communication at Norsk Kjernekraft AS (Norwegian Nuclear Power), a company that wants to build and run nuclear power plants in Norway. When there is a debate about nuclear power, Rose is often visible in the media.

She promotes nuclear power as an environmentally sound energy solution.

### Pink blog

Rose created a pink blog "about nuclear physics and research and stuff". She wanted to be Rose and not "only" a researcher. For her, that means mixing in some pink, makeup, and accessories with the scientific subject matter.

"It is important for me to underline that you can of course be both interested in and good at science while also loving shoes, makeup, interior design and fashion," says Rose.



Sunniva Johanne Rose has her own blog. "If you want to help save the world, sciences is the way to go," is one of her messages.

Using her blog and inspirational speaking she wants to show girls that even if they like pink, they can be whatever they want to be regardless of what their dreams are.

### Diversity is important

Rose believes science should be more, well, pink. The colour itself is not the point here, but diversity. Why? Well, because technology which is developed by a homogenous group of people will probably work best for that group. If technology is developed and tested by one group of people, it can quickly present problems for other groups.

"Most of the things we have were developed by men," points out Rose and provides some examples of the resulting challenges. Women are 47 per cent more likely to be severely injured or to die in a car crash because testing to minimise car crash injuries has been done on crash test dummies that are based on the average male – more than 175 cm tall and weighing 80 kilos.

“The people who developed the airbag didn’t do this on purpose of course, but this example shows that it can be difficult to see the whole picture. This also goes for us women, of course. That is why it is important that both women and men do research,” argues Rose.

### **More girls chose sciences**

“Girls and technology” was founded in 2003 by NHO. Three years later, in 2016, it grew into a national project. Today it gets state funding.

Higher education application figures show that more girls now choose science and technology subjects and that we are on the right course, explains Monica Aasen, national project leader for “Girls and technology”.



“We need all kinds of people to develop all kinds of technology that works in the best possible way for everyone. Diversity is not a fancy word, it is a necessity,” says Aasen.

“The project has created more awareness around the gender-segregated labour market and knowledge about the need for diversity within technology. We have also helped increase application numbers and make the path to technology more visible for more people – for instance for young people who do not have parents who are engineers or any family working in IT,” says Aasen.

The project is still growing. This year it is touring the whole of Norway and will include company visits for thousands of girls. More inspiration days are planned and the project is active on social media like TikTok.



## 2023 Gender Equality Barometer: a dramatic fall

A dramatic fall from 92 to 77 female points – that is the result in the Nordic Labour Journal’s gender equality barometer 2023. It measures whether a man or a woman holds 24 positions of power in the five Nordic countries. 100 points for both genders would mean full equality.

THEME

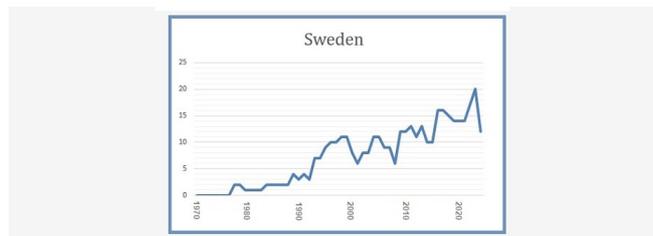
27.02.2023

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL, PHOTO: INGEMAR LINDEWALL/KUNGL. HOVSTATERNA



dent. The changes in the other countries were minor. Denmark did get a new government last year, but Mette Frederiksen is still Prime Minister and several female government ministers carried on, albeit in other ministries.

The main reasons behind the fall are changes in Sweden's political landscape plus the resignation of Iceland's LO presi-



Sweden, however, has seen a change in political leadership. Only two people in Ulf Kristersson’s government have ministerial experience; Minister for Foreign Affairs Tobias Billström and Minister of Finance Elisabeth Svantesson.

The gender equality barometer includes 13 government minister positions. Since this is a Nordic barometer, we have chosen the 12 ministers who participate in the Nordic Council of Ministers plus the defence minister post.

The latter has yet to have its own council of ministers, but this is probably only a question of time if Finland and Sweden become Nato members.

Magdalena Andersson’s government, the first ever in Sweden to be led by a woman, had 23 ministers. 12 were women. That gives a female quota of 52 per cent. Ulf Kristersson’s government has 25 ministers and 12 are women. This gives a 48 per cent female quota.

The difference may seem small, but in the NLJ’s gender equality barometer, Magdalena Andersson’s government scored 12 points while Ulf Kristersson’s only score 6.

The barometer adjusts points according to how much power different government ministers have, and the amount of attention they get. The post of Prime Minister is therefore worth 5 points, the Minister of Finance gets 3 points and the Minister for Foreign Affairs gets 2 points. The other ministerial posts get one point each.

In the Andersson government, both the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs were women and there were also six other female ministers who qualified for points. That brought the total to 13 points. In Ulf Kristersson’s government, the Minister of Finance is a woman but only three other minister posts qualify for points. The result – more than a 50 per cent cut in political points to Sweden, down to 6 points.

2023	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Prime Minister 5 p	X	X	X		
Minister of Finance 3 p		X			X
Minister for Foreign Affairs 2 p			X	X	
Minister of Social Affairs	X	X		X	
Minister for the Labour Market	X	X		X	
Minister of Industry			X		X
Minister of the Justice		X		X	
Minister of Defence					
Minister of Infrastructure					
Minister of Agriculture			X	X	
Minister of Culture			X	X	X
Minister of Education	X	X		X	
Minister for the Environment		X			X
	8 p	13 p	10 p	8 p	6 p

*This is what it will look like on March 8, 2023 (if nothing unexpected happens in the next few days).*

Ebba Busch is the Minister for Energy, Business and Industry. The new government was severely criticised for shutting down the Ministry of the Environment. That portfolio was instead moved to the Ministry of Climate and Enterprise. But we give one point to Romina Pourmokhtari as Minister for the Environment. Parisa Liljestrand also gets one point as Minister of Culture.

Compared to 2022, there are no differences in the leadership of the largest trade union confederations, or in that of the employers’ organisation. We also count five symbolically powerful positions, and Sweden has lost one as Antje Jackelén retired after five years as Sweden’s first female archbishop. This means Sweden this year gets a total of 12 points compared to 20 in 2022.



On 15 December 2022 in Denmark, Mette Frederiksen formed her second government, this time with a larger coalition comprising the Social Democratic Party, the Liberal Party and the Moderates.

Ane Halsboe-Jørgensen moved from culture to employment and Pernille Rosenkrantz Theil moved from education to social affairs – where she took over from a man while Ane Halsboe Jørgensen got a male replacement, which equalised the points.

Meanwhile, Trine Bramsen left her somewhat unusual posts as Minister for Transport and Gender Equality. Thomas Danielsen took over as Minister for Transport while Marie Bjerre became Minister for Gender Equality. Finally, a man instead of Lea Wermelin became Minister for the Environment. All in all, this resulted in the loss of two political points for Denmark.

Mette Frederiksen’s second government has eight women, while her first one had six female government ministers. The number of ministers has increased from 20 to 23, which means the female quota did not increase that much – from 30 per cent to 34.7 per cent.

Denmark loses two points from labour market power positions. The barometer awards 4 points to the LO President and 2 points each for the leaders of the confederations of professionals and academics.

Denmark stands out from the other Nordic countries, however, because Danish LO merged with the confederation of professionals, FTF, on 1 January 2019 and became the Danish Trade Union Confederation, FH.

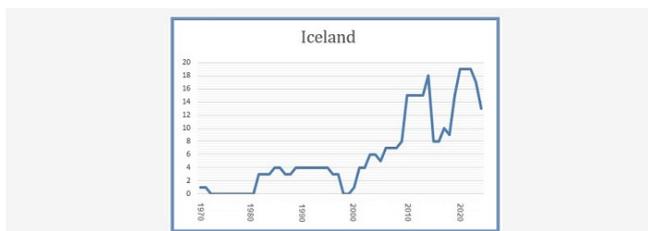
Since the new organisation has the same number of members as LO and FTF, we have chosen to give out six points so that FH President Lizette Risgaard – who came from LO – gets 4 points and her deputy, who came from FTF, gets two points. That position was held by Bente Sorgenfrey until 3 November 2022. She chose to retire and Morten Skov Christiansen took the helm.

He is now responsible for trade union cooperation with the Nordics and the EU. As a result, Denmark lost two points in the barometer.

Sometimes circumstances can lead to surprising challenges. Last year it was Jens Stoltenberg, who everybody thought would be the new head of Norway's Central Bank, but he stayed on instead as Nato Secretary General. That meant his intended deputy Ida Wolden Bache became head of the Central Bank instead.

Last year, Denmark got its first-ever female commissioner of the Danish Police. Lene Frank held the position for six months, after being appointed on 22 August 2022 when the former commissioner Thorkild Fogde was being investigated for his role when Denmark culled nearly all of its minks because of the corona pandemic.

The criticism of Fogde was based on assumptions that he knew there was no legal basis for the cull yet he still used police resources to carry it out. The investigation of his role in the matter cleared Fogde and he was reinstated as police commissioner on 10 February.



As NLJ has mentioned before, the President of the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) Drífa Snædal stepped down on 10 August last year. Kristján Snæbjarnarson took over as interim leader until the ASÍ annual congress in October. He said ahead of the congress that he had no intention to carry on as president.

The congress turned turbulent, however, and the leaders from the three main confederations left negotiations: Ragnar Þór Ingólfsson, chairperson of the VR union, Sólveig Anna Jónsdóttir, chairperson of the Eflinger union, and Vilhjálmur

Birgisson, chairperson of the Trade Union. A large number of congress participants from these unions also left the hall.

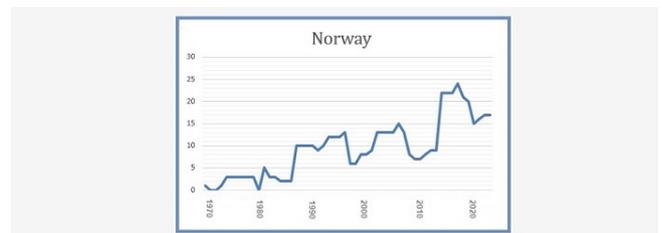
The battle within ASÍ is mainly about the three unions, which together represent more than half of the 113,000 professional members, being dissatisfied with the level of influence they have. Yet it is also about personal battles.

In that situation, it was decided to adjourn the congress until 2023. In April this year, a new date for resuming the congress will be announced. Kristján Snæbjarnarson continued as chairman because the circumstances that arose, according to him, were "unprecedented".

There have been major changes in Icelandic politics too, but so far mostly in the opinion polls.

Katrín Jakobsdóttir has been Prime Minister for five years now, but support for her party has fallen dramatically. The Left-Green Movement got a record-low 6.8 per cent in a Gallup poll from 31 January. When Jakobsdóttir won and became Prime Minister in 2017, her party took 16.9 per cent of the votes.

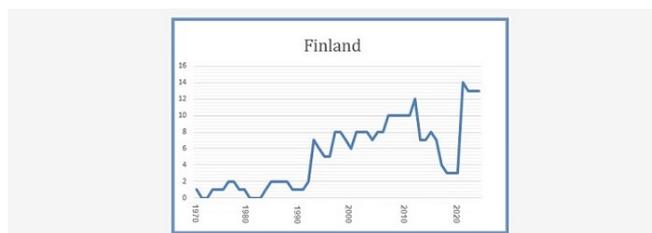
The January poll showed the Social Democratic Alliance as Iceland's largest party for the first time in 14 years with 25.3 per cent support. That is higher than the centre-right Independence Party, which only got 23.2 per cent.



In Norway the political winds blow in the opposite direction, where the Labour Party get record-low support in opinion polls. According to the latest one, the government party gets only 16.8 per cent.

The Norwegian Labour Party governs in coalition with the Centre Party and has struggled with increasing electricity and food prices, world crises and failing projects like the Follo-banen railway tunnel running from Oslo to Ski. It cost 37.5 billion Norwegian kroner (€3.4bn) to build but had to close one week after opening because of electricity cable fires.

There have not been any changes at all, however, in the positions that we measure. They are the same as on 8 March last year, and Norway still gets 17 points.



Finland has not seen big changes to positions of power either and remains at 13 points like last year. Government ministers make up all of these, and the Finnish government has the most women out of all the Nordic countries – 10 out of 19 – which is 53 per cent.

16 April might herald big changes to Finnish politics, when Finns go to the polls in parliamentary elections. If Sanna Marin must step down as Prime Minister she might end up in an even more important post. She is being talked about as a possible successor to EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who came to power on 16 July 2019. She was elected for a five-year period, which means she is in post until 2024.

According to Finnish media, the Socialists and Democrats in the EU Parliament want Sanna Marin as their candidate for the 2024 EU elections.

“Marin’s liberal values combined with a hard line against Russia are seen as a winning combination, possibly attracting support also from other parliamentary groups and from the Eastern and Western Member States,” writes euractive.com.



## Tur-retur tries to halt the brain drain from Finland to Sweden

It is a full table at the pub near Sweden's parliament building. Around ten immigrants have gathered for the monthly meeting of the Swedish association of Ostrobothnians in Stockholm. It is an active association. In addition to the monthly pub meeting, there is a choir and other activities.

NEWS

27.02.2023

TEXT AND PHOTO: BENGT ÖSTLING

Finns represent the oldest and largest group of immigrants in Sweden. But now, Finnish authorities are getting worried about the scale of migration. Far too many have moved west. The Finland House Stockholm is home to the *Tur-retur* (return trip) project, which aims to tempt Finns to move back home – especially the Swedish-speaking ones.

Some 20,000 Swedish-speaking Finns have moved to Sweden over the past 20 years, and only a small minority of them return. The fear is that there will soon be a lack of skilled, Swedish-speaking workers in Finland.

### **Easy to emigrate**

There is a lot of laughter at the pub this Friday night. The people meeting here have created a new life for themselves in Sweden, but it still feels good to be able to speak the old language – in this case some of the Swedish dialects from Ostrobothnia.



*“We love Sweden and have no plans to move back home.” Right to left: Christian and Kerstin Andersson, Yvonne and Peter Ahlstedt, Gunilla Malmstedt and Jenny Maria Ahlstedt, leader of Swedish Ostrobothnians in Stockholm.*

You need both courage and a desire for adventure if you want to emigrate. Those who dare not leave or are happiest at home will stay. Still, tonight’s conversation keeps returning to the fact that everything sorted itself out so easily. Sweden’s open society welcomed these immigrants with open arms.

“Moving to Sweden from Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia must be the smallest cultural crash in the world,” says one of those sitting around the table. Everything is recognisable, they have been watching Swedish TV since they were children and there are no real language barriers.

All those gathered here tonight say they enjoy living in Stockholm, things have been easy for them. Most came to try it out, but fairly quickly decided to stay. There were no problems finding work, unlike in Finland.

- Christian Andersson from Jakobstad came to Stockholm as soon as he had finished conscription. There were no jobs in Finland, and Sweden welcomed him with open arms.
- Gunilla Malmstedt from Kronoby arrived as early as 1979, after finishing a few years of vocational training in Finland. She got a job as a shop assistant in Stockholm before studying abroad and returning again to Sweden.
- Peter Ahlstedt from Lepplax says he is now living his dream in Sweden. He arrived as an adult in 2012. Today he is a self-employed consultant. His wife Yvonne also thought it was obvious that he should go. She joined him a few years later and works as a therapist. A few years after that, their daughter Jenny Maria Ahlstedt came to study, and she now works like the others in a Swedish workplace as an accountant.

The others around the table have similar stories. Many immigrants arrive as a family. Because their children join Swedish schools, their integration works well and they join society

quickly. If you arrive as a young person you might not find a partner until later – a Swede or another immigrant.

**An election issue**

Finns have been a welcome addition to the Swedish labour force.

“Sweden would not have managed without immigration, we built Sweden,” says Christian Andersson. In the 1960s and 70s, Greeks and Finns arrived, before being joined by people from Yugoslavia. Later, immigrants have arrived from around the world.



*Christian and Kerstin Andersson*

Not all immigrants have had it as easy as most Finns. Many in Sweden now point to immigration and a lack of integration as important factors behind crime and turbulence. At the same time, labour immigration is very much needed. This became an important issue in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in September last year, and will most probably be an issue in Finland in April 2023.

**New roles for Finland House**

*Finlandsinstitutet* has performed many roles since it opened in the 1970s. It was a point of contact and a tango hall for the early immigrants – a meeting and cultural space to strengthen cooperation between Sweden and Finland and the only Finnish library in Sweden, helping to carry the language on to the next generations.

The house is an important meeting place for the 100,000 or so people with Finnish ancestry who live in the Stockholm region, and their organisations. The institute also tries to modernise the image of Finland in Sweden, which sometimes is seen as shallow and somewhat old-fashioned.

**The *Tur-retur* project wants to turn the tide**

This is also home to the *Tur-retur* project which works to facilitate the return to the Finnish labour market for those who are moving back home from Sweden.

*Tur-retur* was set up to counter the growing migration from Finland to Sweden, especially among highly educated Swedish-speaking Finns.

The Swedish language population in Finland have traditionally moved a lot. The threshold for moving to Sweden has always been low – the country is considered home turf. Finland’s Swedish-speaking coastal regions could be said to be close to Sweden both physically and mentally.

Over the past 20 years, some 20,000 Swedish-speaking Finns have moved to Sweden (according to figures from the think-tank Magma) and only a small number return. The fear is a resulting lack of skilled, Swedish-speaking labour in Finland.

### **Returning to Finland – even part-time**

Anders Eriksson, director for *Finlandsinstitutet* in Stockholm, was responsible for securing funding from the Swedish Cultural Foundation in Finland.

In the autumn of 2021, the aim was to turn the tide, using various methods to ease people’s return to Finland. This included Finnish language courses at different levels for those who wanted to improve their language skills in order to manage in the Finnish labour market.

The project also highlights the possibilities of remote working and living in both countries. The pandemic has shown that it is absolutely possible, for people in many jobs, to live in one country and work remotely in the other.

### **Cannot afford to lose talent**

“Finland cannot afford to lose too much talent, we have seen how this leads to labour shortages,” says Anders Eriksson. But in order to get along back in Finland, people must have followed developments in their home country and know the Finnish language.

That is why language courses and various events focusing on Finland are organised both for Swedes and Finns. The project has been running for two years and Anders Eriksson hopes funding will continue.



*Linda Granback*

Linda Granback is project leader for *Tur-retur*, and a relative newcomer to Sweden herself. Now she is administering the language courses and the attempts to balance out the number of people moving.

“The initial idea was to make it easier for Swedish-speaking Finns to move back when more and more clearly came here to stay. But we have expanded it since. All immigration is a benefit to Finland, so we also inform Swedes about the opportunities for living, working and studying in Swedish in Finland,” points out Granback. One of the project’s sidelines which has already proven successful is increasing the number of Swedish nationals studying at Swedish-language Finnish universities.

### **Children and roots could determine future demographics**

Linda Granback has seen quite a few people moving back. The pandemic made some people accelerate their plans. More Swedes are also discovering opportunities in Finland, although it is a bigger commitment for them to move there.

The Finns have different motives for moving back. Retirement is often a tipping point when people have to consider where their children and grandchildren live, whether they have a summer house or relatives still living in Finland, explains Linda Granback.

Another tipping point is when people graduate or when they have children. The Finnish schooling system can be tempting, with its excellent reputation. Recent violence in Swedish cities can also have an effect on what people choose, believes Linda Granback.

### **It pays to speak Finnish – also in Sweden**

Many Swedish-speaking Finns move to Sweden simply because they do not want to speak Finnish – their language skills are not good enough to get jobs in Finland. The threshold for learning Finnish in Sweden can therefore be quite high, admits Linda Granback and Anders Eriksson.

Swedish businesses can also benefit from Finnish-speaking employees as many companies in the east of Finland are looking for new export markets in Sweden now that the border to Russia has closed.

But the use of English has also become increasingly common in contacts between Finland and Sweden. Recent Nato cooperation might very well have boosted political cooperation specifically in English, says Anders Eriksson.

### **Identity and solidarity**

The chat around the pub table has moved on to deeper issues of identity and Swedes’ views of immigrants from the East. Finns are considered good and sought-after workers – hard-working and always present. This has not always been the case. Earlier, Finns were considered to be too keen on both drinking and fighting.

Finnish immigrants who have arrived in the latest decades have often been highly educated, which has given them a different social status and they are hardly considered to be immigrants at all.

The classic and delicate question immigrants often get is where lies their solidarity. What is “home” to them? Do they return home to Finland for Christmas or do they return home to Sweden after the holidays? And which country do they support when it comes to ice hockey, football or the annual Finland-Sweden Athletics International?

This issue seems to engage the men around the pub table in particular. They give different answers but promise to have forgotten everything by the next day.

Politics can be a touchy subject too. The Social Democrats have traditionally been seen as strong among Finnish workers in Sweden. Many parties come over from Finland to campaign among Swedish-speaking Finns, who are allowed to vote in their country of birth. Ahead of April’s elections, the Swedish People’s Party of Finland has set up its own local chapter in Stockholm. There are tens of thousands of votes to be won.

# 25 per cent of Norwegian workers say they have lost influence

One in four workers in Norway feel they have lost influence in the workplace, according to the 2022 Medbestemmelsesbarometeret (Joint decision-making barometer). This is felt most acutely among public sector workers.

## NEWS

27.02.2023

TEXT: LINE SCHEISTRØEN, PHOTO: BJÖRN LINDAHL

Around one in three workers in the public sector and in publicly owned companies say they feel they have lost influence in the workplace, according to the 2022 *Medbestemmelsesbarometeret*, an annual survey measuring how much influence workers have in working life.

The OsloMet’s Work Research Institute (AFI) carries out the survey on commission from the Norwegian Civil Service Union (NTL), the Norwegian Medical Association and the Norwegian Police Federation. The first survey was carried out in 2016.

AFI researchers Inger Marie Hagen and Elin Moen Dahl are responsible for the 2022 edition. The results were presented on 24 January at the Oslo House of Literature.

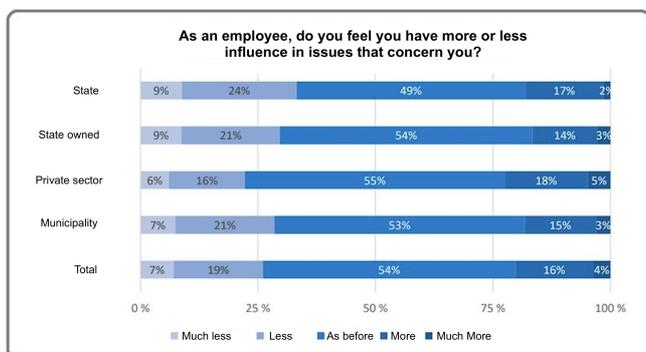
### The main findings

Workers’ influence has been stable since 2016, both in terms of having influence over their own work, the way work is organised and on a corporate level.

they had more or much more influence. This is true for all four sectors (public sector, state-owned companies, private sector and municipalities).

- One in four workers said their influence over important issues had fallen in the past three years.
- One in four workers in the public sector and in state-owned companies said their influence had fallen.
- One in five workers said their influence has increased.
- There is a strong correlation between leadership and workers’ representatives’ experience of influence. Openness increases their influence while formal leadership models and control reduce influence.

AFI researcher Inger Marie Hagen has been the project’s leader and was surprised that so many said they felt they had lost influence in recent years. She points especially to the results from the public sector and state-owned companies.



But when asked whether they feel they have been given less or more influence on issues that are important to the individual worker over the past three years, more people said they have less or a lot less influence than those who answer that



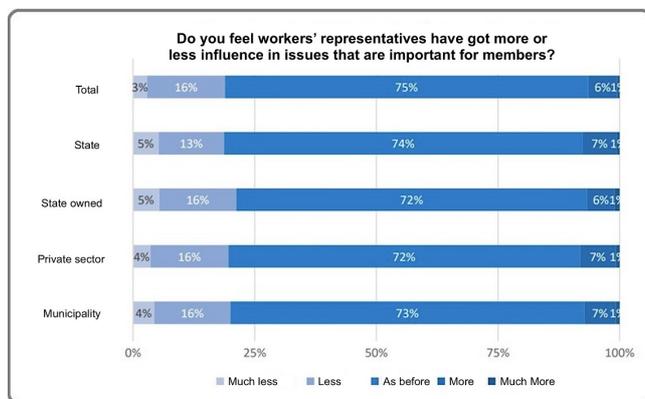
The two AFI researchers to the left, Inger Marie Hagen and Elin Moen Dahl, are responsible for the 2022 edition. Kjersti Barsok, President for the Norwegian Civil Service Union, top right, calls the results disappointing. Kristin Utne from the Norwegian Medical Association, bottom right, believes workers's representatives often enter the processes too late to gain influence.

“A third of them said they had less influence now than three years ago, and that is quite a big change,” she says.

Meanwhile, one in five said they had gained influence.

### Workers' representatives and influence

The researchers say the level of influence felt by workers is linked to the leadership models, the way a company is organised and the role of workers' representatives.



There is a strong correlation between leadership models and workers' influence. There is an equally strong correlation between leadership models and workers' representatives' perceived influence.

- Nearly one in five – 19 per cent – said workers' representatives had much less or less influence, while only seven per cent said more or much more.
- Workers said they were happy with the work that workers' representatives do.
- Work environments, working hours and workers' joint decision-making and participation were top of the list of issues that workers wanted workers' representatives to focus on.

“This means workers feel they have lost influence themselves and that workers' representatives have lost influence too,” says Hagen.

### Pay before climate

For the first time, the *Medbestemmelsesbarometeret* has looked at how well prepared the social partnership has been at dealing with two extremely topical issues: digitalisation and the climate crisis.

The researchers point out that everyone agrees that the climate crisis is the largest challenge facing us, but at the same time the survey shows that climate issues rarely figure high on the agenda among leaders, workers' representatives and workers.

- Nearly six in ten workers said they were willing to change the way they work because of climate issues, but only one in ten was willing to forgo wage increases in order to make the company more climate-friendly.
- Many felt workers' representatives should concentrate more on wages and working conditions than on fighting for climate issues for instance during collective bargaining.

“We should not read these results as if people are not interested in climate issues. It looks like the social partners might not have found out exactly how they should work with climate issues in their normal cooperation forums,” says Hagen.

### A sign of hopelessness?

The labour market is facing considerable demands for digitalisation. This survey asked workers whether their working day had become more or less influenced by digitalisation in the past three years.

- Half answered that their job had become more influenced by digitalisation.
- Two in five workers said digitalisation led to a lot of frustration.
- Nearly two in five said digitalisation led to greater differences between workers.
- Two in five said digitalisation meant more time was spent writing reports.

Yet despite this, the results show there is little engagement from both members and workers' representatives, and that digitalisation and technological development rarely feature when leaders and workers' representatives meet.

In an opinion piece in the online paper *Dagens Perspektiv*, the researchers ask:

*“Is the lack of interest due to the fact that digitalisation processes are running so smoothly that workers' representatives should use their energy on other things? Or are these answers a sign of hopelessness among members and workers' representatives, an indication that they lack the knowledge and skills to enter into these processes?”*

*“Could it be that this is also the case for many leaders and that the digitalisation processes are being controlled by external consultants who sideline both leaders and workers' representatives?”*

### “The state needs to shape up”

Kjersti Barsok, President of the Norwegian Civil Service Union (NTL) finds some of the results disappointing, while

Kristian Mollestad, deputy leader for the Norwegian Association of Researchers, argues the report should be a wake-up call.

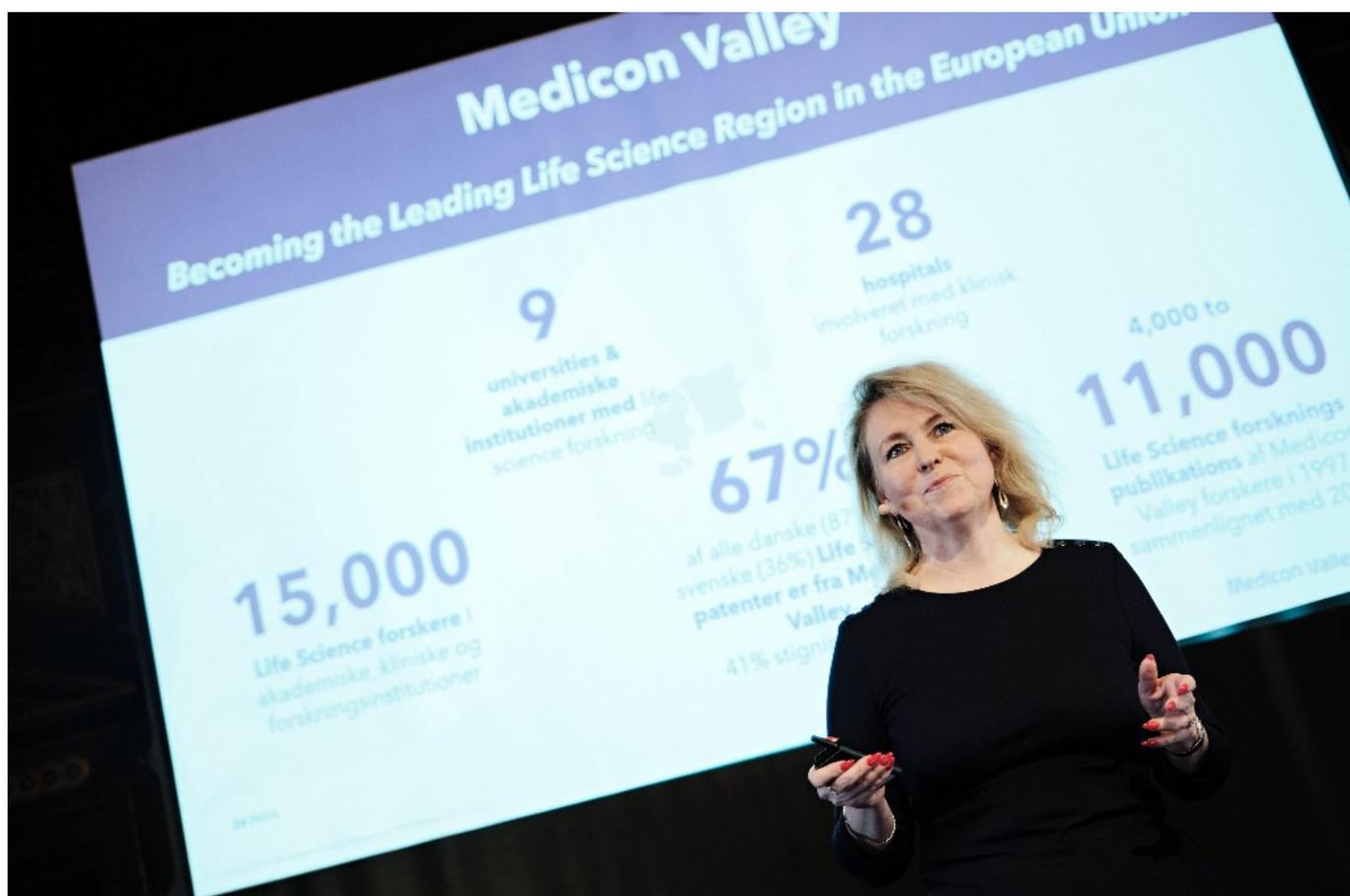


*Kristian Mollestad is the deputy leader of the Norwegian Association of Researchers.*

“It is worrying when state employees are the ones who feel they have lost influence in the past three years. The government has clearly stated that it wants stronger cooperation between the social partners and more trust-based leadership. Yet things are going in the wrong direction in the state sector where the government wields the most influence over labour market policy. That is simply not good enough. The state must shape up as an employer,” argues Mollestad.

Kristin Utne from the Norwegian Medical Association thinks workers’ representatives often join processes at a late stage and never gain real influence in important decisions.

“In the health sector it is often too late when someone higher up has decided to for instance introduce new digital tools from the USA, where the provider puts severe limitations to what the individual can do in terms of criticising the solutions or come up with suggestions,” explained Utne during the launch seminar.



## Creating synergies for life science cooperation in the Öresund Region

Is a bridge enough to expand the common labour market in the Öresund region, or is more needed? The answer from Medicon Valley Alliances' CEO is: We must also become better at identifying and using the factors that benefit both Denmark and Sweden and explore the potential of this.

NEWS

27.02.2023

TEXT: FAYME ALM

“You achieve more by working together than on your own. Our system has proven to be strong and self-sustaining. When we cooperate, network and share knowledge, the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts.”

That is what Anette Steenberg tells the Nordic Labour Journal on a sunny January Friday in Copenhagen. The Danish-born CEO of Medicon Valley Alliance has just stepped off the

stage where she told the audience about the gains made by her non-profit life science organisation which has more than 320 members on both sides of the Öresund sound.

“Our organisation has members from private companies in Denmark and Sweden as well as specialist hospitals and universities that provide researchers. This triangle creates syn-

ergies which attract foreign companies,” says Anette Steenberg.



*The Old Stock Exchange in Copenhagen is ancient*

We are at The Old Stock Exchange which King Christian IV had built to increase Copenhagen’s trade. The building was ready in the mid-1620s and at the time had room for 40 market stalls across two floors.

**The Öresundsregionen platform as a model**

Just like The Old Stock Exchange, Medicon Valley Alliance was created to be a marketplace. It started in 1997 and was originally called Medicon Valley Academy. The current name came in 2007.

The aim was to create a platform allowing a cluster of Danish and Swedish institutions and companies that in some way or other were involved with life sciences to exchange ideas and services.

But the work goes beyond developing the platform in the Öresund region. Medicon Valley Alliance and Lund University are project leaders for HALRIC – a three-year Interreg project with members from Germany, Norway, Denmark and Sweden. It focuses on transforming innovation research based on the Öresund region’s unique infrastructure for life science, explains Anette Steenberg.

She underlines, however, that platform development should start with the involvement of only two states.

“That makes it easier than if all the Nordic countries were to be involved from the start. This would take too long. At Medicon Valley Alliance we first have to prove on a small scale that it works, and then take it to a larger level.”

**The Öresund region – part of the Northern European labour market**

Anette Steenberg and Medicon Valley Alliance are among several organisations meeting at The Old Stock Exchange’s main hall to discuss both the opportunities and the challenges in the Öresund region. Also participating are repre-

sentatives from business, the Nordic Council of Ministers, media, and the Danish and Swedish Parliaments,



*The situation for commuters was discussed during the Copenhagen meeting.*

The Öresund Bridge is the host for the meeting that will be focusing on the upcoming expansion of the labour market region. The Fehmarnbelt tunnel between Denmark and Germany will be opening in six years. 18 kilometres long, it will be the world’s longest immersed tunnel. It is being constructed with support from the EU infrastructure fund in order to strengthen the transport network and increase railway freight in the EU.

The link will remove the bottleneck between the Nordics and the continent, and thus contribute to the creation of a larger, common labour market in Northern Europe.

“The infrastructure means a lot for life science production activities. We already cooperate with Oslo and Hamburg, and with the Fehmarnbelt tunnel we get better access to facilities like ESS and MAX IV in Lund and DESY and European XFEL in Germany,” says Anette Steenberg.

The train journey from Rødbyhavn on the Danish island of Lolland to Puttgarden on the Northern German island of Fehmarns will take seven minutes. By car, the trip will take 10 minutes.

**The challenges**

The journey between Denmark and Germany is not the only bottleneck that needs removing to fully exploit the Öresund Region labour market.

Better conditions are needed for those who directly represent this common labour market – the train and car commuters who cross the Öresund Bridge or those who take the ferry between Helsingborg and Helsingør for jobs on the other side. The fight for improved conditions has been going on for years.

That is why the Copenhagen meeting focused on the commuters' situation. What is needed to attract more people who are willing to make the journey between Sweden and Denmark or vice versa?

Some of the requests presented during the meeting, include:

- The removal of border controls between Denmark and Sweden – “the police should stop criminals, not commuters” as one of the speakers put it. (Since the meeting, The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Southern Sweden has requested a judicial review from the Supreme Administrative Court of Sweden to establish whether the internal border controls are legal\*).
- Revising the Öresund tax agreement between Denmark and Sweden, to make it relevant for today's labour market by for instance accepting working from home – pandemic or not – without changing the country you tax to.
- Allowing people to accept a second job – or board assignment – in their home country while also doing so “on the other side”.

### **Big business**

Making these and other changes would mean an opportunity to make more money. A lot of money according to the Danish Chamber of Commerce, which now owns The Old Stock Exchange.

Their analysis concludes that some 11,600 Swedish commuters to Denmark contributed some 8.8 billion Danish kroner (€1.18bn) to the Danish economy in 2021. This, explains the Chamber of Commerce's marketing director, means that strengthening the common Danish and Swedish labour market and increasing the number of commuters across the Öresund Bridge is “big business”.

The Öresund Region represents big business for the life science sector, which has announced major investments. This year they have announced major investments.

“We are taking about new investments worth 50 billion Danish kroner (€6.7bn) from existing life science activities in the Danish part of Medicon Valley. These investments are primarily for manufacturing development,” says Anette Steenberg.

### **Someone has to take the lead**

She has previously spent 20 years as a diplomat around the world, working with the internationalisation of Danish companies – getting them out into the world while attracting foreign companies to Denmark.

“The key words for my career are and always have been the internationalisation of business. I build bridges between countries,” she says.

“But I am also Danish and therefore I am impatient. I cannot sit still and wait for things to happen, I want to act. You have to take the lead if you want others to follow,” says Anette Steenberg, ending our interview at the former Copenhagen marketplace.

\*In a press release dated 9 February 2023, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Southern Sweden writes:

*“The Chamber of Commerce's request is that the court reverses the government's decision and determines that this for now will not be applicable. The background is a ruling from the EU Court from April 2022 which further clarifies the legal position around the controls.”*

The press release refers to the Germany Bertelsmann Stiftung which “shows that the border controls cost Sweden 50 billion euro in lower GDP if they will remain in place until 2025”. They will be detrimental to commuting and a functioning labour market. It recently emerged that Danish police do not believe border controls work and that increased cooperation is better.”