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New work environment agreement focuses on prevention and permanence

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Finland's changing labour market

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Editorial: More than pink — it's about power

For the fifth year running the Nordic Labour Journal publishes the gender equality barometer. The division of power in the Nordic region is better than ever, but not across the board. This year we focus on religious societies, generally ruled by men. Nordic churches are different, with women as top bishops in Iceland, Norway and Sweden. But does power equal authority?

COMMENTS

06.03.2015

BERIT KVAM

Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir is the new Bishop of Iceland. She compares her job to being prime minister and president at the same time; both positions have been held by women in Iceland before. Iceland is also top of the world when it comes to female employment. They were first to introduce shared parental leave, they have introduced boardroom quotas and they are the first to introduce a 'fair pay certificate' securing equal pay for equal work in the public sector.

They have come this far, yet Bishop Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir in this month's portrait feels attitudes are lagging behind. "Women's words are not trusted to the same extent as men's". There is a fight for the power and authority to define the right faith.

When women conquer new arenas, gender issues become important in new settings. Gender and innovation is a new research area spearheaded by Sweden. It is about challenging what we take for granted. The Swedish research organisation Vinnova calls it a norm-critical innovation where gender and ethnicity are the elements which will provide more innovative solutions and improved competitiveness.

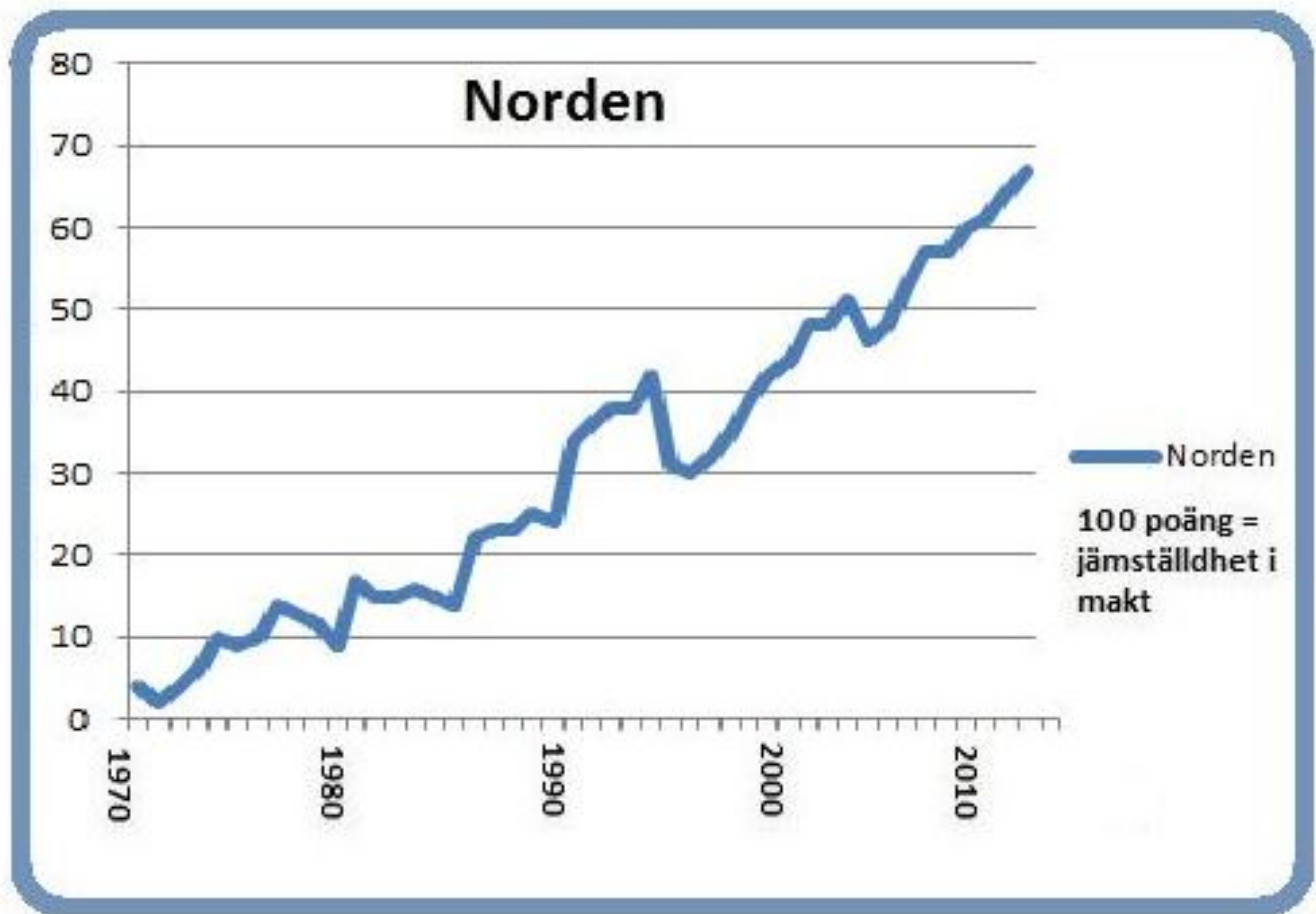
There is also a market waiting, not for a pink car, but for innovations which satisfy women's needs and purchasing power.

These are exciting times. Things are happening. Even for the latecomer Denmark. Men have got a bit longer paternal leave, and the Minister for Equality Manu Sareen is very happy because the Danish alternative to legally binding boardroom quotas, the Danish model, shows more women are entering the boardrooms.

When we look at the graph made by Björn Lindahl illustrating the development in the Nordic countries, the arrow points up and up. Yet things are moving too slowly. Important areas are lagging behind. According to the Gender

Equality Barometer, the Nordic region will only reach full gender equality in 2030 at the earliest.

What will it be? Not pink, but a yet to be defined new reality with a better distribution of power and authority.



Gender equality is slowly but steadily improving in the Nordic region. Yet at the current pace women will get half of the points in the NLJ's barometer no earlier than 2030

The Nordic region became a bit more equal this year

Never before has there been more gender equality in the Nordic countries when it comes to positions of power within politics and working life, according to the Nordic Labour Market's barometer.

THEME

06.03.2015

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL

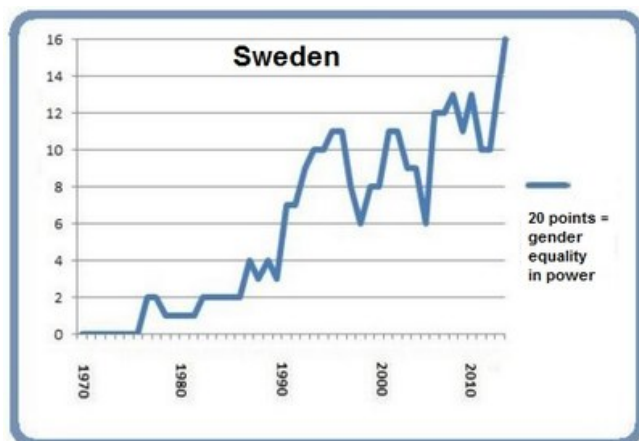
The five Nordic countries reach 69 points, up five points on last year. But there is still some way to go before they reach 100 points. Norway is still in the lead, while Sweden's new government represents most of the increase. Finland is bot-

tom. The most remarkable fact is that the church is now run by women in three out of five countries.

This is the fifth year the Nordic Labour Journal publishes the gender equality barometer, which looks at 24 different positions of power in society and whether these are held by men or women. We give out 200 points for the entire Nordic region. 100 points to women would mean full equality. Each country has 40 points and needs 20 female points to reach full equality.

Country	Points 2015	Change
Denmark	14	-1
Finland	7	-2
Iceland	10	+2
Norway	22	-
Sweden	16	+4
Nordic region	69	+5

Last year Norway reached 22 points and became the first Nordic country to reach full gender equality. This was because many women held positions of power, but also because they had the most important positions which scored the most points. Four of the most important posts according to the barometer are prime minister and finance minister, president for confederations of trade unions and general director of confederations of enterprise. In Norway women hold all of these positions, which gave a total score of 14 points.



Sweden

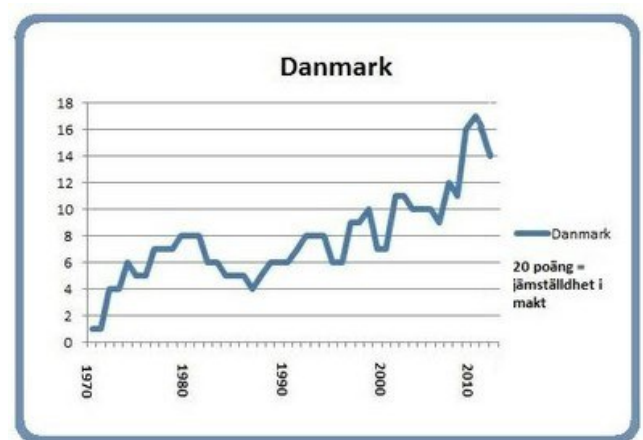
After Stefan Löfven from the Social Democrats formed a government with the Swedish Green Party, two important government posts were filled by women. Magdalena Andersson became Minister for Finance (three points) and Margot Wallström became Minister for Foreign Affairs (two points). The

Ministers for Communication, Culture, Environment, Employment and Social Affairs are also women.

Carola Lemne became Director General for the Confederation of Swedish Enterprises on 11 May 2014. We have given two points to director generals and two points to directors of employer organisations, since power is more divided here than among confederations of trade unions.

On 15 June Antje Jackelén became Arch Bishop. Women have held similar positions earlier in Norway and Iceland (see separate story).

Sweden gets 16 points in all, and a second place. Denmark lost two points in the barometer during a government reshuffle on 10 October 2014.

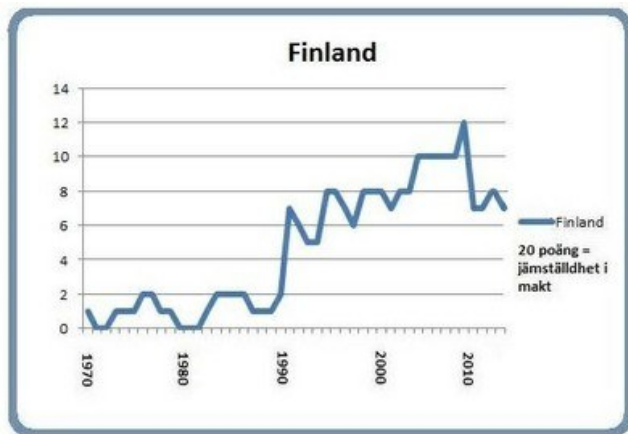


Denmark

The Social Democrat Helle Thorning-Schmidt formed a four party coalition government on 3 October 2011, the first with a female prime minister in Denmark. She made changes to government minister posts twice towards the end of 2013, and reorganised the government on 3 February 2014 when the Socialist People's Party left the coalition. This was a protest against the state's decision to sell its shares in the oil company Dong.

Six government ministers left, seven were reshuffled and four new people got ministerial posts. This meant a loss of two points in the gender equality barometer, leaving Denmark with 14 points.

There have been no changes within working life or in symbolic positions. But between 25 and 28 October this year a new president for the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions will be elected. This is very likely to be a woman, Lizette Risgaard. She has been the deputy president since 2007. There are two other candidates, but 58 percent of the 400 voting delegates told a survey in the Finans magazine in January they would be supporting Lizette Risgaard.

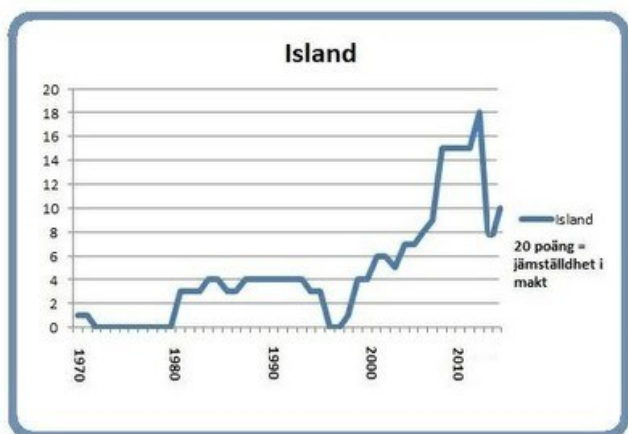


Finland

Changes to governments often leads to less gender equality. There is less focus on gender balance than when a completely new government is formed after an election. This was the case in Finland, when Alexander Stubb from the National Coalition Party of Finland became Prime Minister on 24 June. The number of government ministers was cut at the same time. Among those disappearing was Finland's first female Minister for Finance, Jutta Urpilainen, who had lost the fight to become party leader for the Social Democrats some time earlier.

As early as 18 September there were new changes to the government. The Greens of Finland left the government in protest when energy company Fennovoima was given continued permission to build a nuclear power plant.

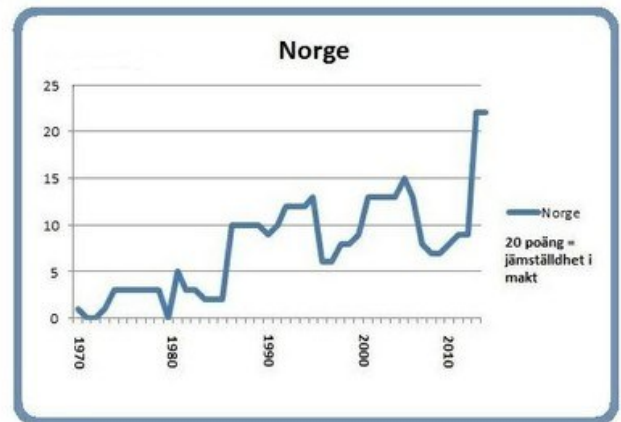
As a result Finland only gets seven points in the gender equality barometer, the lowest score out of all the Nordic countries. On 19 April there are general elections in Finland, which could influence the government's composition.



Iceland

There have been changes to the government in Iceland too. Sigrún Magnúsdóttir became Minister of the Environment

on 31 December 2014 and replaced a man. Ólöf Nordal became Minister of the Interior. Iceland is always the most difficult country to compare to the others because there are so few government ministers, but the country gets two extra points compared to last year and ends up with 10 points.



Norway

Norway is top of the class with 22 points. Here women actually have two points too many for the genders to be equal. But the country is the most gender equal of all in the barometer and has not seen any changes in government in the last 12 months.

There have been no changes in the labour market or in the symbolically important positions either. Last year the centre-right government faced problems with feminist priority issues, like prostitution and abortion. This year the conflicts are between the government and its two supporting parties in parliament, the Christian Democrats and the social liberal party Venstre, over asylum and integration policies. A government reorganisation is not out of the question after this autumn's local elections. But Frank Aarebrot, Professor of comparative politics at the University of Bergen, believes it will take longer before the Christian Democrats choose to work with the opposition Labour party.



Arch Bishop Antje Jackelén makes Eva Nordung Byström Bishop of Härnösands diocese on 14 December last year

The importance of gender equality in religious societies

The really big symbolic changes sometimes happen without people noticing. The church in three of the five Nordic countries now has a woman as its highest leader. Compared to the rest of the world, this is where the Nordic region is now top when it comes to gender equality.

THEME

06.03.2015

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL, PHOTO: MAGNUS ARONSON /IKON

On 15 June 2014 Antje Jackelén became Arch Bishop of Uppsala diocese and therefore the top leader of the Church of Sweden. Since October 2011 Helga Haugland Byfuglien has held the same role in Norway, and in Iceland, where there is only one diocese, Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir was made Bishop on 24 June 2012.

That means 15 million out of the 26 million Nordic citizens live in countries where the highest authority in the largest religion is a woman. Regardless of your faith or whether you are religious at all, this is of great symbolic importance.

The former Nordic national churches have more or less become independent from the state, and membership numbers

have fallen. But religion plays a more important political role now than it has done for many decades.

Religious free schools

“Although Sweden has been spared the more extreme movements, we too see an increase in religious political influence. In 1991 the Christian Democrats entered parliament. A few years later there was a change to the national curriculum which said schools must also be based on ‘Christian traditions’. This still applies today,” writes Professor of social science Bo Rothstein in an op-ed in the daily Dagens Nyheter.

“In addition we now have an education system where even fairly fundamentalist religious free schools receive full state support.”

Religious societies represent the last place in our society where gender equality is not being observed. There is no authority which demands gender neutrality when religious societies appoint imams or rabbis. But the authorities can make state support conditional of these societies meeting certain demands.

Norwegian police recently carried out a raid on the Catholic church which stands accused of wrongfully claiming 50 million Norwegian kroner (€5.8m) in state support by finding “Catholic names” in the phone book and then list these as church members.



Arch Bishop Antje Jackelén

Meanwhile value-based organisations are playing an increasingly important role in trying to heal the wounds in the wake of terror attacks, like 22 July 2011 in Norway. During a memorial ceremony that same summer an atheist participated next to a priest and an imam.

Arch Bishop Antje Jackelén was invited to meet the Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas when he visited Sweden. Last year many were interested to see whether the far-right Sweden Democrats would remain seated in the church when she held a sermon as part of the official opening of parliament —

the political party had left the ceremony in protest the year before. Shortly before a PR agency had called Antje Jackelén the “Hottest name in Almedalen” (a week of political discourse on the island of Gotland).

Some of the most important initiatives come from outside of the established religious hierarchies, like when Norwegian Muslims formed a human chain outside Oslo’s synagogue after a terrorist shot two people dead in Copenhagen in February, including a guard at a synagogue there.



Fatima Dugan and Hibaq Farah, two out of more than 1,000 Muslims who formed a ‘Peace Ring’ outside the Oslo synagogue (Photo: Björn Lindahl)

Religious societies are organisations which literally have been around for thousands of years. When you talk about gender equality in religion there are different levels. The first, if we stick to Christianity, is whether women are able to practice the religion for themselves and to practice it with a degree of independence, for instance as nuns in a convent.

The second level is whether women are allowed to preach, like priests do. The third level is who manages the priests and the fourth and top level is who manages the bishops.

The Catholic church has nuns, but not female priests. The idea of a female cardinal or a female pope is still utopian. Both Islam and Judaism have female imams and rabbis, but for now these are mostly found in countries like the USA and Canada.

First Bishop in the Church of England

The Church of England has appointed its first female bishop for 500 years. That is the number of years since the Anglican, like the other Lutheran churches, separated from the Catholic church.

Libby Lane has been the Bishop of Stockport since 26 January this year. She is 49 and was ordained a priest in 1994. She is married to another priest and has two children. Accord-

ing to Prime Minister David Cameron it was “a historic decision and an important step forward for the Church towards greater equality in its senior positions”. Canada got its first female Anglican bishop as early as 2007.

It is not immediately obvious why gender equality has come the furthest within the Lutheran church.

Martin Luther himself did not think much of women, and blamed Eve for the cardinal sin.

He considered women to be “less rational than males in a scheme within which rational equated with better; they were more inclined toward emotion.”

“All women, in his view, were inclined toward gregariousness and chatter”, write Susan C Karant-Nunn and Merry E Wiesner-Hanks in the book ‘Luther on Women, A Source-book’.

Not altogether equal in Buddhism

The fact that women are not allowed to participate in religion on an equal footing with men is more to do with tradition than with what the founders of religions themselves were thinking. Muhammed was enlightened for his time and gave women rights which they would have to wait hundreds of years to be given within Christianity.

Outside of the Abrahamic religions, it is mainly Buddhism which offers a certain degree of gender equality. Buddhist monks in India are called bhikkhu and a nun is called bhikkhuni.

In Buddha’s teachings there is no difference between woman and man. They have the same prerequisites for listening, learning and acquiring the Buddhist message. Buddha stressed that if a woman follows the noble eightfold path she can become enlightened and reach Nirvana, just like a man.

“Buddhism reached Sweden for real in the 1970s and 80s. But there were already a few Buddhists in the early 1900s. The first to declare herself a Buddhist was a Social Democrat called Kata Dalström. Half a century later, in 1955, Ingrid Wagner was ordained a Buddhist nun and was given the name Amita Nisatta together with her husband Karl-Henrik Wagner, who was given the name Anagarika Sugato,” writes Dietmar Dh. Kröhnert on buddhisminfo.se.

He points out that Sweden officially introduced freedom of religion only in January 1952. Before that it was illegal to leave the Church of Sweden.

In practical terms, however, there was no gender equality within Buddhism, since Buddhist nuns must follow 311 life rules and convent rules, while a male monk only needs to observe 227 rules. The 84 extra rules are linked to the gender. The first rule says a nun must always be subservient to a male monk, no matter how young he might be or how short a time he has been a monk for. A woman might have been a nun for

a hundred years, while a man might have been a monk for one day, the religion states.



Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir

Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir: The Bishop who is spring cleaning the church

Bishop Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir has been sitting in her office in Laugavegur in Reykjavik city centre preparing the Sunday's sermon in peace and quiet. Now she is sat facing me, answering my questions quietly and to the point. The first question goes straight to the point; what is it like being a bishop?

PORTRAIT

06.03.2015

TEXT: GUÐRÚN HELGA SIGURÐARDÓTTIR, PHOTO: GUNNAR V. ANDRÉSSON

With a surprised laughs the Bishop explains that it is a very rewarding job.

"You have to work hard all the time. There is no downtime in the church. My work tasks are stimulating," answers Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir.

"A bishop's work is mainly administrative. If I were to compare my work with the state hierarchy, the Bishop is both prime minister and president," she explains.

Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir was elected Bishop of Iceland in the summer of 2012 as the country's first female Bishop.

Power struggle

She has not noticed any prejudices against women within the church. But she has noticed that there are differences between the sexes when it comes to how you are treated. Women and men are not always treated in the same way.

“I don’t think this is about prejudices against women. But there is always a difference depending on whether the church leadership is male or female. Women’s words are not trusted to the same extent as men’s,” says Agnes.

It’s about power. There is a power struggle between different factions within the church. Some are conservative and fight against change, others prefer the church to change.



And the differences between the sexes has made itself known in that power struggle. Agnes explains that some times it has been unclear who has power and who has not, or how the person with power will use that power. This has led to disagreement within the church.

Sometimes she wonders how she would have been treated if she were a man. Would men talk to her in the same way? The church is coloured by the political power struggle. And that is not nice for a woman who has avoided politics all her life.

Choosing between men and women

Women make up nearly 40 percent of Iceland’s priests. The first female vicar was appointed in 1974, yet despite this just under 20 percent of vicars are women today.

The male way of thinking is still strong. This is evident in the language. But Agnes M. Sigurðardóttir stresses that feminist theology is now a subject at the University of Iceland’s faculty of theology.

The parishioners want to be able to choose between a man or a woman. The low number of women can result in a lot of pressure on the women within the church.

“it is necessary to have both women and men in church jobs. But sadly this is easier said than done,” the bishop says.

“Parishes decide who runs for the job as a vicar. This does not always result in what you might wish for,” says Agnes

“The rules also make it more difficult for young and well educated theologians to get jobs. People with experience come first,” she says.

Financial problems

There is high unemployment among Iceland’s theologians, despite the fact that many of them now work abroad, especially in Norway. In 10 to 15 years time a large group of Icelandic priests born between 1945 and 1955 will retire, which could mean better times for the unemployed theologians.

The church of Iceland has had financial problems which have worsened in the past five years. It has had to make cuts because the state has not managed to keep its financial agreement with the church.

The state collects membership fees for all of the country’s parishes, but has not handed over the entire sum to the church because of the financial crash in 2009. This has led to cuts and redundancies in the church.

Slowly turning

The church can be compared to a giant oil tanker which is slowly turning. The Bishop is keeping a steady course and at the same time tries to improve the unity among the church’s representatives. She is making her mark on the church with her “spring clean”.

“I have tried to bridge divides and create agreement within the church and to sort out issues which are invisible but still being felt,” she says and compares her work in the church with a spring clean.

“I consider the church to be my home. I need to clean my home, both the living room, the kitchen, sort out the store room and the boxes. Right now I’m spring cleaning the church one room at the time.”

Should function well

Church workers’ hours are unpredictable and it can be difficult to coordinate work and family life. The Bishop believes it is important that church staff are happy and healthy. That shows in the church community.

“My wish is that everything should function well within the church, that we know for sure who does what and when in the cooperation between vicars and parishioners or parishioners and the church leadership.

“If these things don’t work, other things within the church aren’t likely to work well either.”

The latecomer in gender equality is waking up

Gender equality in Denmark has been falling behind the rest of the Nordic countries, both when it comes to female boardroom representation and paternity leave, but now things are moving forward.

THEME

06.03.2015

TEXT: MARIE PREISLER

Denmark has been the latecomer in the Nordic region when it comes to gender equality. But this has been changing lately both for men and women: Public sector workers will now be offered one more week of paid parental leave, and the Danish model for getting more women into boardrooms seems to be working.

Longer paternity leave

Danish fathers still get considerably shorter pregnancy and paternity leave than fathers elsewhere in the Nordic region, but the differences are getting smaller. A new agreement secures public sector workers a pay increase as well as the right to one extra week of parental leave on full pay, without shortening the mothers' pregnancy leave.

The extra week is awarded to men working in the state, in regions and municipalities. Male state employees will go from six to seven weeks' paid parental leave, while men working for a municipality and in the regionally run hospital sector will see an increase from 12 to 13 weeks paid paternity leave.

New parents in Denmark enjoy very different parental benefits depending on what agreements they are covered by — some private employees only get 5.5 weeks, while some men in the public sector now can get up to 13 weeks of fully paid parental leave. The one extra week of parental leave for public sector workers is therefore a very important victory for gender equality, says the Danish Institute for Human Rights, which has been established by the Danish parliament in order to promote gender equality in Denmark. The institute hopes more paternal leave will benefit women's career opportunities, reduce the pay gap and put fathers in a better position in case of a divorce when child custody must be decided.

More women in boardrooms

There are also small but important steps towards more gender equality in Danish boardrooms. Denmark is against quotas for female representation in company leadership teams and on boards, and the country has chosen a voluntary sys-

tem instead. This now looks to have increased female representation, if only to a smaller degree.

In 2012 the government introduced a so-called Danish model in which the 1,200 largest private companies and all state institutions must define goals for how many women they should have on their boards and develop policies for how they generally can get more women into leadership positions.

The first review of the Danish model's effect shows the number of women boardroom members in Denmark's largest companies rose from eight to 11 percent in the first year after the law was introduced, and that half of the state institutions and companies already now have achieved gender balance on their boards.

The review also shows that both private and state institutions which do not already have real gender equality, are working on ways to increase the number of women. In public companies the aim is to get an average of 40 percent women into top positions. Private companies aim to have a woman in one in four top positions.

The Minister for Equality, Manu Sareen (the Danish Social Liberal Party) says he is happy with the development:

"The results from state institutions and companies tell me we have chosen the right model. If both public and private companies reach their goals, we will see a considerable increase in the number of women on boards in three to four years time, and hopefully also in leadership positions generally. This is good for gender equality and for society as a whole," says the Minister for Equality, Manu Sareen.

He considers the results to be a success for the Danish model:

"It's fantastic that we now can see the results of the Danish model. The model is unique in Europe, because on the one side it obliges companies to sign up to measurable goals and policies, while at the same time it gives leaders room to play by not introducing quotas," says Manu Sareen.



Not all customers are white men

It is women who decide over most home purchases and their buying power is growing. Yet most products are created with men in mind. This is one of the reasons why Sweden's innovation agency Vinnova's has created a unique new program which focuses on norm-critical innovation.

THEME

06.03.2015

TEXT: GUNHILD WALLIN

When women buy a new telephone they are interested in how it can contribute socially. Men making the same purchase mainly look at its performance. When women come ashore after a few summers on a recreational boat, they might say "never again". One important reason might be that they have spent their summer on a vessel which has been made without any thought of what women need. This has an impact on their experience of a holiday at sea.

And what do the driver's cabins of long-haul trucks look like on the inside? How can we improve ergonomics and other needs to make it better for women to work as truck drivers?

Female specific products often turn out small and pink. But with no change in that attitude, companies will loose out on the big economic potential female consumers represent. They are now the strongest purchasing group and are behind 80 percent of all purchasing decisions, except when it comes to alcohol and tobacco, according to Professor Linda Scott from the University of Oxford.

This is where the company Ampersand in Gothenburg comes in. For many years it has been looking at innovative solutions which incorporate women's perspectives both in the manufacturing, retail and marketing of goods.

“Our theory is that not all customers are white, middle-aged men and when producers and marketers realise this, much better business can be made,” says Tatiana Butovitsch Temm who runs Ampersand together with colleague Camilla Palmertz.



Tatiana Butovitsch Temm (right) and Camilla Palmertz.

Reaches a larger customer group

By taking gender, ethnicity and age into consideration when creating new products, but also during retail and marketing, businesses will reach a far larger customer group. This will also have an impact on the bottom line and on the products themselves.

“Gender issues in Sweden are often about organisation, about gender division in boardrooms and leader groups, but we do something different. We see the benefits of including the woman as a customer in product development, marketing and retail, without the exclusion of men. Changing organisations takes time, this is quicker,” says Tatiana Butovitsch Temm.

We meet the day after she returns from the Women Buy conference in Munich. This is the conference’s second year. Tatiana Butovitsch Temm is full of enthusiasm. Her company is one of the conference organisers, together with Volvo and the company Design-people from Århus. The conference homepage says this is not a political movement or a women’s liberation conference. This is about how companies and organisations can grow their business by understanding women better — the world’s fastest growing customer group.

“Companies are measured by their profitability. That is why we want to create an interest in including women by following the money,” says Tatiana Butovitsch Temm.

Women want more than small and pink

Her talent for thinking in terms of genders goes way back. She used to work for Volvo, where she and a group of other women created a concept car where all decisions were made by women. The car was presented 11 years ago, it was a success and was showcased on nearly all continents. Today 22 of their ideas are in production in the car industry, including

the possibility of topping up windscreen fluid without having to open the bonnet.

“The concept car was not small, not pink and not shown together with babies, which is nearly always what happens when you make something especially aimed at women. There are other important things to focus on. For instance a good driving position, a good view and somewhere to put your handbag,” says Tatiana Butovitsch Temm.

Men are winners too

She says men were surprised. “But it looks good”, some said when they saw the concept car. And perhaps this is at the very core of the issue. When women influence the way products are made, they do not make them worse for men. On the contrary, says Tatiana Butovitsch Temm. When you look at which qualities men and women look for in a product, they overlap or compliment each other to a large extent, she says.

There might be what she calls “a pink fragment” which stands out targeting quite narrow female desires, and sadly, she observes, many companies aim for the little pink fragment when they want to target women. You get razors which are smaller, pink and more expensive. Or hotels aimed at women which offer skin lotion rather than good lighting in their bathrooms and adjustable chairs to suit men and women.

It sounds like companies and female as well as male consumers would all be winners if you were to introduce gender focus in the creation of all new products. Yet things are moving slowly. One reason is that producers are scared their products will be feminised. Women are more likely to buy masculine products whereas men are less likely to buy feminine ones, observes Tatiana Butovitsch Temm.

“We work a lot with major male-dominated companies, and things have been going well for them, so they might think ‘why change a winning concept?’. But the big obstacle is to believe that we are already equal, that there are no differences between men and women. You say all customers are equally important and do not want to single out women. This is like turning a big oil tanker around,” she says.

Norm-critical innovation

Through a grant called ‘the Diversity Lab — norm-critical innovation’ at Vinnova, Ampersand recently got money for a pilot study. They will work together with Chalmers Business Innovation at the Chalmers University of Technology to start developing a national index which companies can use in order to see how inclusive they are when it comes to their customers.

“Ampersand’s work, which looks at how technology can improve if you take women into consideration, is one of the choice bits coming out of ‘the Diversity Lab — norm-critical innovation’,” says Sophia Ivarsson at Vinnova.

She is responsible for the development of what she calls a unique programme. It is unusual to use a norm-critical approach as a starting point for innovation creation, and the programme has also got international attention. It started when Vinnova wanted to support gender equality in existing innovation structures. This gave exciting results, says Sophia Ivarsson.

Needs were defined in new ways and the projects created more innovative solutions. The new programme 'Norm-critical innovation' would focus specifically on how established norms, like gender, ethnicity and other reasons for discrimination represent an asset for innovation. The grant also underlines that the solution itself should be innovative. Sophia Ivarsson has several examples of projects which had secured money from the grant.

One is run by the Swedish National Police Agency. Their drugs squad picks up male users but rarely female ones. They wanted to use the project to find innovative solutions for how to profile drug users to better reach female users. Another example is the Equalisters which is developing an equality calculator where the media can analyse their own output to see who is being heard in the media.

Some unexpected and undesirable results

Breaking norms can mean many things, however. It could be to not always do as customers expect, but do something unexpected and unwanted. One example: some years ago a 'workman's kilt' was developed, which would help workmen on hot summers' days. Another example is the so-called Androchair, which started out as a joint project between the KTH Royal Institute of Technology and the Halmstad Health Technology Centre, which looked at a classic gynaecological chair in a gender perspective. It turned out that it was not even adapted to women's needs, it was not suitable and had remained largely unchanged since its inception. The project also discovered that there was no chair which suited men with gynaecological problems.

The result was the development of the Androchair, a concept chair to demonstrate the double gender problem. The Diversity Lab has later continued the work to develop a unisex chair for gynaecological examinations of both men and women.

"When you link gender equality and innovation you increase the ability to innovate and you get a more equal and sustainable society," says Sophia Ivarsson.

In 2015 15 million Swedish kronor was awarded over two rounds of grants. Most of the money has been awarded to pilot studies.

"There is a lot of interest, and we have had more than 100 applications for each round. These are cutting edge issues. It also represents new ways of looking at innovation and to create innovation," says Sophia Ivarsson.

The Nordics: Failing reforms exclude youths with disabilities

More flexibility does not lead to a more inclusive labour market. Political reforms carried out in the Nordic region in the first decade of the millennium do not have any measurable effects either, concludes the Nordic research group behind the report 'New Policies to Promote Youth Inclusion'.

NEWS

06.03.2015

TEXT: BERIT KVAM

What is needed to help minority ethnic youth and young adults with disabilities access the labour market and find permanent jobs? How efficient are political measures? These are questions both politicians and policy makers want answers to. That was also the aim of the Nordic project commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers Labour Market Committee.

Since the 1990s the Nordic countries have introduced new legislation, economic incentives and voluntary agreements to promote inclusion in the labour market. Yet in the report 'New Policies to Promote Youth Inclusion', the Nordic group of researchers who have followed developments in the decade since the year 2000 conclude that the policies have actually led to greater inequality rather than improved inclusion into working life.

"There is little doubt that a great number of young people with disabilities have been practically excluded from gainful employment in the Nordic countries," says the head of the project, Rune Halvorsen from the Oslo and Akershus University College.

The debate in Norway has centred on whether it becomes easier for people to enter the labour market if you relax rules on temporary employment. The researchers have not found anything that indicates that temporary employment makes the labour market more inclusive.

"Denmark has the most flexible labour market in the Nordic region, but does not do better than any of the other Nordic countries in this area. On the contrary, it looks like Denmark is doing worse than Sweden when it comes to including disabled youth into working life," says Rune Halvorsen.

Together with his colleague Professor Bjørn Hvinden, he has worked with researchers from all of the Nordic countries and

gathered data from Eurostat, from the countries' own statistics agencies as well as carrying out their own surveys.

Fewer in work

"Between 2002 and 2011 employment among youth with disabilities in the Nordic region has not improved in line with the rest of the young population, Sweden being the exception. Denmark has had the most remarkable development, with an eight percent fall in employment," says Rune Halvorsen, highlighting statistics from Eurostat LFS.

When it comes to employment among youth with disabilities, he divides the Nordic region into two groups. In Denmark and Norway employment has fallen, in Sweden and Finland it has remained unchanged.

Increased difference

The same picture emerges when the researchers compare results for youth with and without disabilities. In Denmark and Norway the employment rate among youth with disabilities is lower than that for young people without physical handicaps. This difference has increased further over the past decade, and the increase has been greater in Denmark than in Norway. In Sweden and Finland things have remained the same.

Between 2005 and 2011 Denmark, Finland and Iceland have seen a very similar development. Employment among young people has fallen. In Iceland and Denmark employment has fallen among people with disabilities and particularly among those with chronic illness which limits their daily activities.

This difference in the employment rate between youth with disabilities and youth with serious chronic illnesses increased further towards 2011. Norway has seen the same development, to a slightly lesser degree, and the difference be-

tween youth with less serious and serious disabilities has not had the same accelerating development but remained stable.

Sweden stands out

The general trend between 2005 and 2011 for youth with disabilities has been that employment has fallen or remained stable, but Sweden stands out. There the employment rate among youth with disabilities has increased in this period, especially among youth with serious, chronic illnesses.

Fewer in education

The Nordic countries have also seen different developments when it comes to education. In Denmark and Finland fewer youth with disabilities were in education between 2002 and 2011 compared to youth without disabilities. The differences have increased over the past decade. The same goes for Norway. The differences have not increased in the same period, but remained quite stable. Here too Sweden stands out, with more youth with disabilities in education, and the difference between youth with and without disabilities has fallen.

Things are different for youth with serious disabilities. The education rate among youth with serious disabilities has risen in Denmark, particularly between 2008 and 2011, while the opposite has happened in Sweden, where the increase in employment has been bigger.

Young outsiders - NEET

“We see no signs of improvement here,” says project leader Rune Halvorsen about the NEET group.

The number of people not in employment, education or training has remained stable between 2000 and 2010 in all of the Nordic countries, according to the Eurostat LFS disability ad hoc module. When it comes to youth with disabilities, the number of NEETs has risen in Denmark and Norway, while it has remained stable in Finland and fallen in Sweden. There is little difference between youth with and without disabilities in Sweden, while the difference is particularly big in Iceland.

Minority youths

When it comes to minority ethnic youth, the situation is more complicated. It looks like the chance of getting a job has improved for this group in Denmark, Finland and Sweden. The number of NEETs has also fallen, especially in Finland and Denmark, where many have continued their education. In Norway the employment rate has remained unchanged, but more have entered into education.

Policies with poor result

There has been a change in Nordic policies from economic redistribution to political measures aimed at including more youth with disabilities and minority ethnic youth into the labour market. The result has been more inequality rather than more integration.

“It does not look like political reforms in the Nordic countries have increased employment opportunities for youth with dis-

abilities. On the contrary, many have been excluded from the labour market.”

Better statistics needed

“But we need better, comparable statistics,” says Rune Halvorsen.

“Eurostat recommends a joint definition for all the countries, but the definitions are being adapted in national surveys.

“There are, for instance, different definitions of ‘employment’. In Denmark apprenticeships are considered employment, but this is not the case in the other Nordic countries.

“When it comes to disabilities it is difficult to know what is considered to be a serious disability, and it is unclear whether the same questions are being asked over time.”

Employers afraid of hiring

The researchers have highlighted mechanisms which enable or prevent the labour market aspects for the two youth groups. Interviews with employers have unveiled that they fear minority ethnic youth and youth with disabilities will stand out too much and not fit in at work, and that this could influence workplace culture. Rather than recognise their responsibility, they fear increased costs.

The transition from education to work is particularly challenging.

What works?

These are complex processes which demand complex solutions. We have looked at a wide spectre of measures in order to reach these groups,” says project leader Rune Halvorsen.

[Download the publication here](#)

Finland's changing labour market

Finland is struggling to emerge from the economic crisis, and it is being felt in the labour market. Only one in ten Finns believe the situation will improve this year. Nearly half of them believe things will get worse, according to a working life barometre from the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

NEWS

04.03.2016

BY CARL-GUSTAV LINDÉN

Statistics Finland carried out 1,000 interviews about workplace conditions in the autumn of 2014, and the results were presented in early February.

Although Finland still has one of the best labour markets in the EU, figures are in the red for the fourth year running. People are even less optimistic about the future now than during the first two years of the 1990s, the last time Finland suffered from mass unemployment.

Expectations are particularly low within the public sector, for obvious reasons: public debt is mounting while the government plans to dramatically reduce the number of municipalities and to reorganise public services. Industry workers have the most positive outlook. Industry jobs were cut as soon as the financial crisis hit in 2008-2009, and now the sector is hiring again.

Rising unemployment

The pessimism is also mirrored in rising unemployment figures. In January 359,600 unemployed Finns were looking for jobs, which is a 10 percent increase in 12 months. The fastest growing group is the long term unemployed, where the increase has been nearly 20 percent. Total unemployment stands at 8.8 percent, up 0.3 percentage points on last year.

Maija Lyly-Yrjänäinen, senior advisor at the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, believes things are not as bleak as that. She points out that Finnish workers enjoy the most flexible working hours in Europe, while their opportunities to work from home have improved too. Women and people in their lower middle age with small children in particular should now be able to enjoy a better work/life balance.

According to a major European company survey (Eurofound 2013), Finns have the best opportunities to work flexible hours. 57 percent of all workplaces allow employees to decide

when they start and finish their working day. The European average is 32 percent.

Finnish workers can also make more use of overtime in order to take more annual leave. Larger Finnish workplaces in particular have been going through a bit of a revolution. Half of those questioned in the survey said their work tasks had changed and that new methods had been introduced. This included new work processes as well as new products and services which open up for new ideas.

"People now have more opportunities to develop their skills and to take part in the development of their workplace," says Lyly-Yrjänäinen. White collar workers with higher educations have been noticing the changes the most.

The Finnish government wants the country to have Europe's best workplaces by 2020. The economic crisis has thrown spanners in the works, but the working life barometer shows the problems might also lead to new ways of working better.

New work environment agreement focuses on prevention and permanence

Denmark's work environment will be strengthened over the next four years with 135 million Danish kroner (€18m), mainly aimed at preventing violence, threats, workplace accidents and burnout.

NEWS

06.03.2015

TEXT: MARIE PREISLER

Permanence and prevention are two central themes in an agreement between the Danish government, the Socialist People's Party (SF) and the Red-Green Alliance to allocate 135 million Danish kroner (€18m) over the next four years for a range of work environment measures.

The money will be aimed at preventing violence, threats, workplace accidents and burnout. Hospital workers and school teachers will be given the chance to learn new ways of avoiding violence and threats. The agreement also improves measures aimed at helping people who are psychologically tired to stay in the labour market. So far people who have been physically tired have had the opportunity to get help to change work tasks or trades. This will now also be available for people who are psychologically tired.

The agreement also means more money for work environment research, including research into whether nano particles can have an impact on consumers' and workers' health.

There will be improved control measures against social dumping. Foreign companies operating in Denmark must register there. This will now be expanded to include foreigners operating as sole traders in Denmark.

It will also be possible to report workplace accidents from the casualty department and there will be money allocated to strengthen the fight against sexual harassment.

The Minister for Employment Henrik Dam Kristensen (the Social Democratic Party) is particularly happy that the agreement will secure even more jobs by preventing accidents, violence and burnouts.

"Even though we have a fundamentally good work environment in Denmark, there are still workplaces where safety and health is not up to scratch — and we are going to put a stop to that," he says.

Victory for the Finnish Electrical Workers' Union in EU Court of Justice

”6 – 0 to the Finnish Electrical Workers’ Union!” ”The greatest thing to have happened since the Laval judgement!” Reactions from the employees’ side were exuberant when the Court of Justice of the European Union announced its preliminary ruling in the case concerning 186 Polish electricians who had been posted to Finland.

NEWS

06.03.2015

TEXT: KERSTIN AHLBERG, EDITOR EU & ARBETSRÄTT

The electricians claim they have not been paid according to the Finnish universally applicable collective agreement.

The case touches on two fundamentally important issues. Firstly, did the Finnish trade union have the right at all to bring the posted workers’ case to a court of law? Their employer claimed it could not. But of course, answered the EU Court of Justice, which decided that preventing the Electrical Workers’ Union from representing the employees would be in breach of the EU’s directive on the posting of workers and the EU’s charter of fundamental rights.

What does the minimum rates of pay comprise?

The other major question in this case is which of the benefits in the Finnish collective agreement for the electricians and building installation trade are included in the minimum rates of pay that the Polish company must pay its employees. The directive on the posting of workers introduces certain frameworks, but within these member states can decide what the minimum rates of pay comprises.

And that could be many things, according to the EU Court of Justice. Firstly, the host member state decides how the minimum rates of pay are calculated. The collective agreement involved in this case, for instance, divides workers into wage groups and stipulates a minimum hourly wage or piece rate for each group.

As long as the division into groups and the wage calculation is carried out in accordance with binding and transparent rules, the foreign company must follow them. Daily allowances can also be included in the minimum rates of pay, if these are paid on the same terms to workers who are posted from a different country as for those posted within their country.

Same issue as for Norway’s shipbuilding case

The case is about terms in a certain collective agreement, and wage structures in other collective agreements might look very different. But in principle this covers the same ground as the Norwegian “shipbuilding case” which was decided by Norway’s Supreme Court in 2013, leading to a complaint from the EFTA Court. There is disagreement in Sweden too over what the term minimum rates of pay in the directive on the posting of workers means.

With the new judgement from the EU Court of Justice it is clear that what the parties define as minimum levels in their collective agreements for different categories of workers and working tasks, also applies to posted workers, as long as the rules are clear and binding so that they are applied equally to them and to domestic workers.

Equally important for Nordic trade unions is the EU Court of Justice’s message that they cannot be prevented from representing workers who have been posted here, in just the same way as they represent domestic workers.



Greenland's new proposed budget gives a clear indication that new economic challenges lie ahead

Anda Uldum: The man with the key to the national coffers and the mines

Greenland's new Minister of Finance and Raw Materials, Anda Uldum, is facing a giant challenge.

INSIGHT

06.03.2015

TEXT: MADSDOLLERUP-SCHEIBEL, PHOTO: BJÖRN LINDAHL

No test drilling for oil.

Slow progress in establishing new mines.

High unemployment.

A large deficit of 275 million kroner (€36.9m)

And to top it all there is the prospect of introducing rigorous economic reforms in order to balance the national budget.

Greenland's new Minister of Finance and Raw Materials, Anda Uldum from the centre-right Democrats party is not short of challenges. When his party went into coalition with the social democratic Siumut party after last November's elections, it created a stir. The parties have often been fighting like cats and dogs in parliament over Greenland's future development.

On the other hand, the two parties agree on crucial political issues, not least on whether Greenland should be mining for uranium. Both the Democrats and Siumut feel the country should not shy away from such activity.

The Democrats have also managed to influence raw material policies, which means the coalition now acknowledges Greenland's need to offer favourable conditions in order to attract foreign investors to mining projects. This change of tack is no quick fix in itself, however. It usually takes years from a project is born until a mine opens.

A deficit this year

As a result of last November's election and the creation of a new coalition government just before Christmas comprising the two parties plus the liberal conservative Atassut party, it was not possible to get a new budget in place before the end of 2014.

The new coalition's budget proposal was presented last month. It gives a clear indication that major economic challenges lie ahead. The coalition predicts a deficit of just under 85 million kroner (€11.4m) this year, while the aim is to balance the budget by 2018.

They are far from being close to making ends meet this year.

The government, Naalakkersuisut, is expecting falling revenues from the American Thule Air Base in north Greenland, because the partly state owned company Greenland Contractors did not win the latest tender. Meanwhile the quota for the country's very valuable natural resource, prawns, has fallen by as much as 14 percent in west Greenland.

The Death Gap

This hurts when Greenland, like many other Nordic countries, is struggling with traditional welfare challenges: An ageing population and fewer tax payers.

"The Death Gap is a reality, not a remote threat, which means we need to strictly control our economy this year and in future, and we need to introduce reforms to cut expenses," said Anda Uldum as he presented the coalition's budget proposal last month.

The expression "Death Gap" refers to the not altogether distant gap between state revenues and expenses, if politicians in the short run fail to cut expenses and in the long run fail to introduce economic reforms in order to have enough money for welfare also in the future.

The government has announced 50 million kroner (€6.7m) in cuts, partly by reducing the government administration and by capping public expenses.

Another new initiative from the new government is three-party negotiations with the social partners.

Anda Uldum wants to invite the parties to talk about a range of reforms, some which are aimed at making it more attractive to work rather than receiving benefits. Because there are some major paradoxes in the labour market.

The latest figures from Statistics Greenland show 4,400 people are registered as unemployed in the municipalities. Yet employers still have to import a lot of labour, and the fisheries usually always lack workers in the high season.

Meanwhile many people take early retirement. So if the government can get more people into the labour market, everybody's quality of life will improve and the public sector will save millions of kroner.