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Norwegian pilot project: get work-ready in the workplace

**Theme**

Gender equality: Finland improves more than any other Nordic country

**Editorial**

Most issues now have a gender dimension

**News**

Record low unemployment in the Faroe Islands – just 296 people

Mar 06, 2020

## Theme: Gender equality in the Nordics



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# Most issues now have a gender dimension

The 8th of March is being marked in many different ways across the Nordics. What is the most important issue on International Women's Day? We look at what has happened after women again have managed to gain more positions of political power in Finland, how the fight for equal pay is doing in Sweden and what Denmark is doing to fight sexual harassment in the workplace.

EDITORIAL

06.03.2020

BY BJÖRN LINDAHL, EDITOR IN CHIEF

We could mention many other issues. After all, what issue does not have a gender dimension? At the annual gender equality conference in Norway, artificial intelligence was one of the main themes. At the same time, Norway's new Minister for Equality Abid Q. Raja talked about his personal fight to be able to choose his own partner, Nadia Ansar.

"In the beginning it was mainly my own fight. Getting what I wanted. Gender equality was something I started thinking about after we had our twin daughters and my Pakistani family started to say they were sorry for me. They said they would pray for me so that I could have twin sons as well."

Things might seem to be moving slowly in many areas. But change is happening, if you only look close enough. This is the tenth year we present our gender equality barometer, where we look at whether men or women hold 24 positions of power in each Nordic country. This year, Nordic women got 83 points, a real leap from last year's 66 points. 100 points for women would represent full gender equality in these particular positions of power.

In order to gain power – be it only over your own situation – you usually need a job.

There will always be those who find themselves further removed from the labour market than others. They might have psychological, social or cognitive problems. The Nordic welfare societies always strive to allow everyone the satisfaction of getting a job. So much of our identity depends on being able to support ourselves and to contribute to society.

Norway's welfare authority NAV has been in stormy weather. Thousands of people who received certain kinds of benefits have been wrongly sentenced to pay hundreds of thousands of kroner because they were in an EU country while receiving the benefits. NAV, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the courts have concluded that the EEA agreement does allow people to receive these benefit also while residing abroad.

But nobody is completely sure, and it is not easy to work at NAV these days.

There are, however, plenty of very engaged NAV employees who want to make a difference, according to a project led by the Norwegian Work Research Institute. Caseworkers at NAV were allowed to choose a number of their most difficult candidates and concentrate their work with them. This produced results.

Rather than focussing on how to adapt a person to a workplace, the opposite was done: trying to change conditions in the workplace so that it adapted to the individual instead. The project shines a light on the relationship between bureaucracy vis-a-vis private enterprise. Is something important lost when we treat people according to the principles governing private enterprise, where the drive for efficiency always makes it more profitable to identify the best candidates?

This is knowledge which the Faroese employment service has also arrived at. When you only have 296 unemployment people in a population of 52 000, it is no use coming up with standardised courses. All job seekers are treated on an individual basis instead. New professional groups have been involved, including psychologists, therapists and coaches.

"We try to meet people with trust, openness, humanity and positive expectations," says head of department Högni i Stórustovu at ALS, the Faroese employment service.



Finland's Premier Minister Sanna Marin on a visit to Sweden, with her Swedish counterpart Stefan Löfnev behind her.

## Gender equality: Finland improves more than any other Nordic country

Denmark moves into pole position as the Nordic Labour Journal publishes the 2020 gender equality barometer. But Finland enjoys the biggest increase of women in positions of power. The result is another shared bottom place with Sweden in the comparison between the five Nordic countries.

THEME

06.03.2020

TEXT: BJÖRN LINDAHL, FOTO EPA/CLAUDIO BRESCIANI

The barometer looks at whether 24 different positions of power in each country is being held by a woman or man on 8 March. 100 female points for the whole of the Nordic region would represent full gender equality. In 2020, women gained 83 points, up from 66 the previous year – the barometer's greatest increase ever. Each country gets 40 points each to give out depending on whether the positions of power are held by a woman or a man. Some positions, like Prime Minister, get more points.



Sometimes big changes happen nearly without anyone noticing, because it seems normal. The gender equality barometer covers a period of 50 years – from 1979 to 2020. This year’s 8 March is unique. Never before four out of the five countries been run by a female Prime Minister.

Finland’s Sanna Marin is that country’s third female Prime Minister, while Mette Frederiksen, Katrín Jakobsdóttir and Erna Solberg are all the second female Prime Minister in their respective countries. Only Sweden has still not had a female Prime Minister.

Measuring power is a complicated thing, and our gender equality barometer should not be considered evidence that women in the Nordics are now 83% gender-equal. But it does matter if a man or a woman is at the top. We look at the positions with the largest symbolic heft – all of them democratically appointed. The only position no woman in a Nordic country has held so far, is commander-in-chief.

This is what has happened in the different countries:



**Denmark**

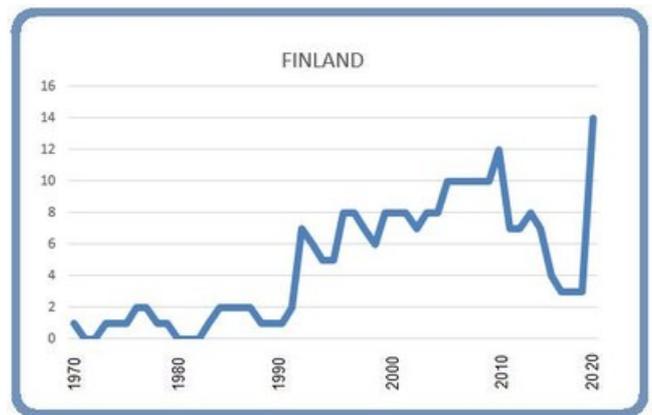
On 27 June 2019, Mette Frederiksen became Denmark’s Prime Minister, as head of a coalition government made up of her own party, the Social Democrats; the Social Liberal Party, the Socialist People’s Party and the Red-Green Alliance. The heavy-weight position as Minister of Finance

went to party colleague Nicolai Wammen, who had served as Minister of Defence and Europe Minister in previous governments. The only female Minister of Finance Denmark has ever had was Pia Gjellerup, who held the position for less than a year between 2000 and 2001.

The appointment of a female Minister for Social Affairs in Astrid Krag was not a surprise however. Women have had a near monopoly on that post. Since 1970, the Minister for Social Affairs has been headed by a woman for 41 years.

Trine Bramsen became the second female Minister of Defence, perhaps not a post where feminism has made its greatest mark, but she started off straight away by launching a new veterans policy; not only soldiers get hurt. Their children can also suffer and families are broken up. That is why she now wants to improve measures for soldiers returning from serving abroad, so that veterans’ families can be better looked after.

Mette Frederiksen’s government has 20 ministers in total, including herself. Seven are women, all bar one in positions which are included in the barometer. There have been no changes to positions of power in trade unions and among employers, or in other important positions.

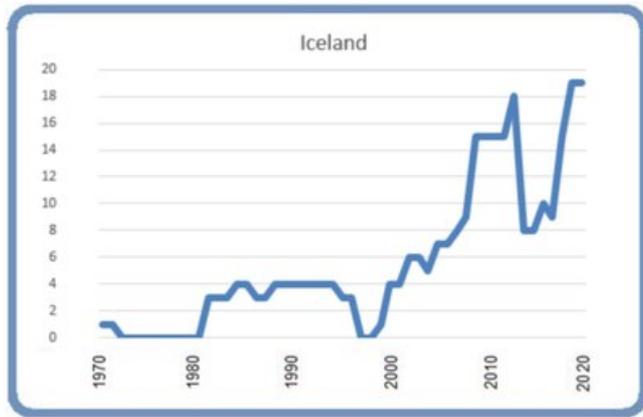


**Finland**

Finland takes the greatest leap on the gender equality barometer – from 3 to 14 points. But all the changes are political positions. Trade unions and employers still have only men in the most important positions of power.

There are no women to be found in the five positions we choose to follow: central bank governor, supreme court president, police commissioner, archbishop and commander-in-chief. There have been women in some of these posts only twice in the past 50 years: Sirkka Hämäläinen was Governor of the Bank of Finland between 1992 and 1998, and Pauliine Koskelo was President of the Supreme Court of Finland between 2006 and 2015.

Click here to read our article to find out about the recent year’s changes to the Finnish political landscape.

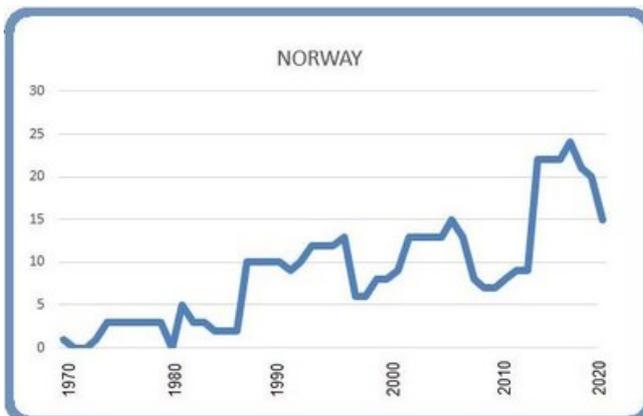


**Iceland**

There has been major political change in Iceland since the 2008 economic crisis. Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir has been leading a broad coalition since 2017 comprising her own Left-Green Movement, the Progressive Party and the Independence Party. The government encompasses the entire political spectre from left to right.

Katrín Jakobsdóttir is also Minister for Gender Equality. She has held a high profile and has built new coalitions on the international stage – like the Wellbeing Economy Governments Group – WEgo – together with Scotland and New Zealand.

All of the three largest trade unions in Iceland are run by women. The island’s only bishop is also a woman, Agnes M. Sigurdardóttir. She took up her post in 2012, as the Icelandic state church was facing its greatest crisis after her predecessor had been found to try to cover up sexual assaults within the church. Agnes M. Sigurdardóttir was appointed to clean up the church’s reputation, but seems to have failed in gaining the trust of her fellow Icelanders. Only 19% say they trust her, according to a survey from October 2019.



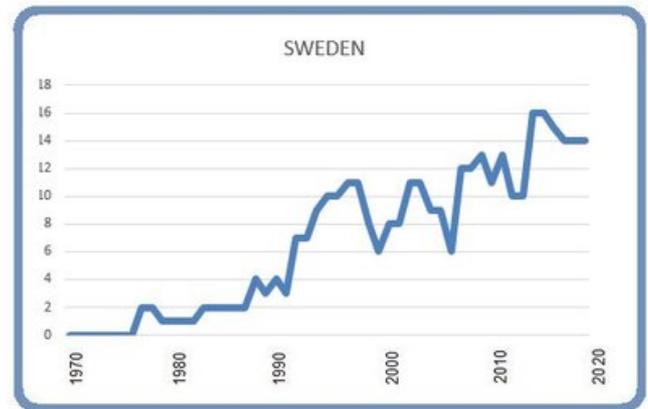
**Norway**

On 24 January, the Norwegian Progress Party left the centre-right coalition government. The fact that the least feminist

party left power had the paradoxical effect of robbing Norway of 5 points, taking it down to 15 from 20. In the following reshuffle, Anniken Haugland from the Conservative party also stepped down as Minister for Labour and was replaced by Torbjørn Røe Isaksen.

Iselin Nybø is a new name in the government, from the same party. She became Minister for Education. Abid Q. Raja became Minister of Culture and Equality and is so far the second government minister with an immigrant background.

Tina Bru is the new Minister of Petroleum and Energy, a post which is included in the gender equality barometer. There were no changes to the gender balance among the social partners, but Arch Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien retired on 20 January this year. Olav Fykse Tveit took over. In April last year, Norway got its second female National Police Commissioner, Marie Benedicte Bjørnland. She was previously head of the Norwegian Police Security Service.



**Sweden**

Sweden has seen some government reshuffles, but none had much impact on gender balance. On 10 September 2019, Ylva Johansson stepped down as Minister for Employment to take up her new post as EU Commissioner. She was replaced by Eva Nordmark.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström also stepped down around the same time and was replaced by Ann Linde, who had been an EU Commissioner. The Minister for Social Security also left the government and Lena Hallengren took her post.

The government has 23 ministers, 12 are women and eight of them are in posts that result in points in the barometer. The government is made up of the Social Democrats and the Greens, but lacks a parliamentary majority. It has, amongst other things, been forced by the opposition to carry out labour market policies that LO – the trade union federation – is unhappy with.

In February, a debate emerged about whether Prime Minister Stefan Löfven will retire as party leader in the spring, which

he says he will not. LO's President Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson has already announced his retirement. These two positions of power are seen in context. Both Löfven and Thorwaldsson have been Presidents for what used to be LO's most powerful trade union, Metall. But now Kommunal, the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union, wants to take over that role, partly because there is unease about the fact that more than 40% of Metall's 300 000 members – mainly men – vote for the Sweden Democrats.

People are already calling for a woman to take over both as LO President and as party leader for the Social Democrats.

“Sweden is the only Nordic country that has not had a female Prime Minister, and that is just not good enough. The Social Democrats carry a big responsibility for promoting more women and to prepare them for the hardest task,” writes Jonna Sima in an editorial for Aftonbladet newspaper.



Demonstration at Sergels Torg in Sweden

## Three minutes less unpaid work for Swedish women

We are edging ever so slowly towards equal pay, according to the annual demonstration #lönheladagen (#payallday) which was held in Stockholm's Sergels Torg. This year the participants made the shape of the time 16:09.

### THEME

06.03.2020

TEXT AND PHOTO: GUNHILD WALLIN

The number symbolises the wage gap between men and women. There has been a small reduction in the amount of unpaid work carried out by women, but the demonstrators warned that gender equality is facing dark forces and that progress made must be protected.

“There are those who see no problem with an increasing gap between men and women. That is why we must defend the progress that has already been made to make sure we move forwards, not backwards,” said Swedish Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen as she addressed the demonstration.

This was the eighth year the #lönheladagen demonstration gathered in Sergels Torg in Stockholm. The aim is equal pay for equal work and that women should be paid for the whole of the working day. The Swedish Women's Lobby, an umbrella organisation for the country's women's organisations, coordinated the demonstration. Until now it has been known as the “16:06 movement”, and has also gathered political women's organisations and trade unions.

“It is incredibly important to highlight the issue of gender wage gaps and to do something about them. It is not right

that men get higher pay just because they are men. For us, it is also important to address this through the wage formation, and through demonstrations like this,” says Peter Lennartsson, deputy leader at the Union of Civil Servants ST.

### 51 minutes of free work every day

16:09 is the time of day when the wage gap between men and women starts – women work for free for 51 minutes until five o'clock, while the men are paid until the end of the working day. As part of the demonstration, the participants slowly took position to spell out the time so that onlookers could see whether things had improved since last year.

And things have improved in the eight years since the first demonstration. In 2013, women worked for free 69 minutes of the working day. Today their unpaid work has shrunk to 51 minutes. As a result, the movement has now changed its name to the 16:09 movement.



Clara Berglund is the Secretary General for the Swedish Women's Lobby and has mixed feelings about the result. If things keep moving at this pace, it will be 23 years before we reach equal pay.

“It is nice to see that so many people show up and that so many different trade unions and other organisations are represented. This gives us more energy, but I am also frustrated that things are moving so slowly,” she says.

### Inspired by Iceland

The Swedish Women's Lobby is a politically independent organisation with 47 member organisations. They work to strengthen women's position in society, and for a gender-equal society based on the UN's women's convention CEDAW. Some of their priorities include women's power and influence in society, feminist economy and women's paid and unpaid work.

The #lön gathering is one of several measures they are taking in the fight for equal pay. The idea comes from Iceland, where a similar campaign has been held – women there simply left work as they reached the time of day when unfair conditions meant they started working for free.

Today the wage gap between men and women stands at 10.7% when everything is calculated as full-time work, according to the Swedish National Mediation Office, the authority responsible for public wage statistics. This means women earn on average 3,900 Swedish kronor (€368,-) a month less than men, or 46,800 kronor (€4,418,-) a year.

Over a lifetime, the wage gap grows to several million. The gap also has a serious impact on pensions, and men's average pensions are 32% higher than women's. On top of that, women take more parental leave, do more housework and work more part-time than men.

There are several explanations for the differences in wages. Female-dominated occupations are less valued, but regardless of the sector women earn less than men. This is not unique to Sweden, says Clara Berglund.

“The other Nordic countries have approximately the same wage gaps and the same gender-segregated labour markets. Women enjoy high employment levels in the Nordic region, but women are most often found in the female-dominated welfare sector,” she says.

The Swedish Women's Lobby analyses the budget in order to help improve gender equality.

“This is the most important tool we have, were all political promises are translated into kronor and ören. The two latest national budgets have seen economic inequality rise. Partly because of another tax rebate, partly because of the abolished värnsskatt [“austerity tax”, a tax on high earners] – both measures that benefit highly paid men,” says Clara Berglund.

### Gender equality work, an uphill struggle

“In later years we have experienced both passive and active opposition to gender equality work, and we have also seen people question it. There has been more focus on identity politics and the debate has also turned more individualistic. But if we focus on the individual and identity we risk losing the structural perspective and the collective power,” says Clara Berglund. On this issue, she underlines, she speaks as a representative for the Swedish Women's Lobby, not as the coordinator for the 16:09 movement.

And although the work for equal pay and conditions moves slowly, she remains hopeful.

“The #metoo movement created hope, but I also see strong engagement for gender equality issues among young women and also young men. Joining forces, involving trade unions and women's organisations, will give us the power needed to move these issues forward. This is what has created progress so far,” says Clara Berglund.



## Lipsticks or bulls? Finland has changed after women came to power

There are great expectations linked to the new Finnish government. International media have celebrated Finland, the land of gender equality. Women lead the government and they are also younger than ever. Many also believe the content of politics and its execution change when women are “allowed to participate”.

THEME

06.03.2020

TEXT: BENGT ÖSTLING, FOTO: CATA PORTIN

Finnish politics has long been perceived to be dominated by older men. But many felt something very special happened on election night in April 2019 – both party members, voters and candidates.

The parliamentary election led to a rejuvenation and more women MPs. The Green League had the youngest candidates and the highest number of women.

Government negotiations led to a new coalition. The Social Democratic Party took over the Prime Minister’s office after the Center Party, which carried on in government despite losing in the election. The National Coalition Party and the Finns Party had to leave, and the Left Alliance, the Green Alliance and the Swedish People’s Party joined.

Over the summer, more young women were elected to party leadership posts, and they also became government ministers. Katri Kulmuni heads the Centre Party, Maria Ohisalo is the new Green Alliance leader.

### **Sanna Marin new Prime Minister**

The government stepped down in the autumn, and Antti Rinne had to go. The Social Democratic party elected Minister of Communication Sanna Marin as its new Prime Minister, with a small margin. She is 34 years old. This summer she is also expected to be officially elected party leader for SDP after Antti Rinne. In reality she already leads the party.

Now the whole world is talking about the world's youngest Prime Minister Sanna Marin, even though someone even younger has emerged since her appointment.

Sweden has traditionally been seen as the trailblazer when it comes to gender equality and a leader in the Nordic region. Now, Finland is taking up position as the new country of gender equality. There was great interest last autumn when Finland held the EU Presidency.



Thomas Blomqvist is the Finnish Minister for Equality. It feels really good to be the Minister for Equality, he says. He sounds proud of all the attention and is happy with the government's program for gender equality.

"We have the same government programme as the Rinne government. There is a lot about equality there. As the Minister for Equality, it is a good starting point when the whole government is interested and committed to promote equality and introduce new measures," says Thomas Blomqvist.

Things did not get worse when Finland got a new, female Prime Minister and women as party leaders. Things are clearer for people and for the media, more interesting when all five government parties are women, says Thomas Blomqvist.

This strengthens the equality aspect, or at least it seems like that. What Finland does when it comes to equality is gaining a lot of interest.

### **Risking a backlash**

"The Finnish example is also important because of what we can see in many other places around the world. During the EU Presidency, we noticed a certain backlash for women's rights and equality in some areas," says Thomas Blomqvist. That makes it even more important to highlight such issues on an international and European level. Sadly the coronavirus has now put a stop to some important events which were meant to look at these issues.

The government programme is good, says Thomas Blomqvist. So is the response from all stakeholders. That is a good start. But Blomqvist underlines that the work has only just begun.

The government's equality programme has been out on its first consultation, and a report on equality policies is due to be presented to parliament during this parliamentary term.

Many concrete programmes are lined up for implementation, also for things other than equality.

### **Family reform**

The family reform has a large equality aspect to it, says Thomas Blomqvist. There is also focus on equality when working with the budget. Equality should be a natural part of all major structural reforms, and it is necessary to take into account gender-related consequences. All policy areas should have a gender perspective, just like in the EU.

Blomqvist is also preparing to cooperate with the social partners on an equal pay programme aimed at bridging the pay gap. The government wants more wage transparency, less segregation in the labour market and improved equality overall. An action programme to combat violence against women is in the works, and is currently with the Minister of Justice.

Measures for increased employment rates also have a gender aspect. The aim is an employment rate which is higher than 75%.

In addition to being Minister for Equality, Thomas Blomqvist is also responsible for Nordic cooperation. The Nordics have long excelled when it comes to equality, so there are good examples to be found. There is much to learn from the other Nordic countries, the minister says.

It is not possible to implement everything in Finland right away. But other countries have done better in many areas, and it is important to study how they have gone about this. There are also differences between the countries which means you need different kinds of measures, says Thomas Blomqvist.

### **Female dominance in the Nordic region too**

It is the Prime Ministers who run the Nordic cooperation and agree on reforms. The fact that four out of the five Prime

Ministers are now women might give things an extra dimension? Thomas Blomqvist says he has not even reacted to the fact that Sweden now is the only country with a male Prime Minister.

“Yes, this is an important sign of how equality has improved. It is historically unusual to have a female Prime Minister. Yet Finland has had three women in that job. We have also had a female President and female parliament speakers. So it is not entirely uncommon to have women in the most important jobs in Finland or in other Nordic countries.”

Right now it so happens that there are many women Prime Ministers in the whole of the Nordic region.

“I hope, and do believe, that this will not be so unusual in the future. But the Prime Minister post is also symbolically important. You should have the same opportunities regardless of your gender when it comes to top posts,” says Thomas Blomqvist.

“The fact that there are so many women in that job now, is a sign that we have got many things right when it comes to equality.”

### **Gender equality if all leaders are women?**

But back to Finland and the women’s government. Is everything really OK? Thomas Blomqvist has not been directly presented with criticism or opposition against the large number of women in the government’s leadership.

He has, however, read about an opinion which is sometimes expressed in Finland, that equality does not work if all party leaders are women. Where are the men, some equality supporters now ask.

“This is no collective decision, each party has decided for itself to elect a woman. It has turned out like this by chance.”

Thomas Blomqvist reminds us that Finland has had innumerable governments with men leading all the political parties. Now there is a situation where all are women, and he does not see that as a problem. But it is interesting, since we have a long history with men dominating, he points out.

“I want our work with equality to lead to a situation where men and women enjoy the same opportunities,” says Thomas Blomqvist.

Although women are leading the parties in government, it is important to remember that the governed is quite close to having an equal quota, says Thomas Blomqvist. There are men in the government too after all, even though there is more focus on the five female party leaders. There are seven men and twelve women government ministers.

### **Sewing circle and lipstick government**

The Finnish government has come in for some tough criticism from former government parties the National Coalition

Party and the Finns Party however – and from the evening papers.

The *Ilta-lehti* tabloid recently criticised the government for focusing too much on refugees and climate change, and not enough on the economy. The newspaper compared the government's top ministers to a sewing circle and said they should look up from their handiwork. But the government is asleep like *Sleeping Beauty*, wrote *Ilta-lehti*'s political correspondent Mika Koskinen.

Opposition politicians have called the government a *Spice Girls* government and a *lipstick government*. That term was made “word of the month” by the Institute for the Languages of Finland in December.

It could be a positive or negative term, depending on whether or not you consider lipstick to be an appropriate feminist symbol, writes the Institute on their website. One person’s shallowness, another person’s courage. And red lipsticks can also symbolise the new government’s main political colour.

The term was launched by the Ostrobothnia regional board of the National Coalition Party’s women’s association in a critique of the new government. The old government was described as a flock of bulls, while the new one got the lipstick tag.

### **Female politicians must defend themselves**

Women who are active in politics know they will always be asked who is looking after their children. This question is rarely put to male politicians. Women who have experienced motherhood are often considered to be better at organisation and taking leadership of complicated situations.

Looks and clothes also get a lot of attention. Anyone opening up their wardrobe to the press has to get used to ending up in the entertainment section rather than the politics section, a female politician points out.

Conflicts between female politicians are often described as catfights, while male politicians are often admired for being principled and ideological. The new Finnish government has already experienced all this.

### **Is there a small difference?**

There has been very little research into whether there really is a difference between female and male politicians. Is there such a thing as a female political perspective? Does this government work in a different manner than earlier ones, which had more men? Thomas Blomqvist does dare say in what ways the new government's working methods or rules differ from previous governments. It is his first year in government. But he is happy with how this government works.

It has been pointed out that participation, inclusion and discussion is more visible in the new Finnish government. Past

governments were characterised as efficient and technocratic.

Personalities do matter of course, people are different and each politician or leader is a human being, says Thomas Blomqvist. What matters is individual abilities. That is why you cannot say something general about female or male politicians, he reasons.

The way government works and politics in general have also changed because social media now play such an important role. The good thing is that this makes decisionmaking more transparent. It has, however, also sometimes made the internal decision process unnecessarily complicated, says Thomas Blomqvist.

Social media, however, have made it much easier to spread hate online. Female politicians say hate messages are now part of everyday life. Both male and female Finnish politicians are condemning the increasingly coarse tone. Proposed legislation aims to deal with targeted online attacks. These are considered to be a democratic problem because they aim to silence the women.

# Confronting sexual harassment at work in Denmark

The social partners and authorities are joining forces to confront widespread harassment in Danish workplaces, particularly sexual and gender-related behaviour which new research shows to hit far more women than men – including in politics and the IT sector.

THEME

05.03.2020

TEXT: MARIE PREISLER

For some women working in Danish politics, being harassed by men because of their gender has become part of their working day. A survey shows that many women working in IT also experience gender-based harassment from colleagues and management.

One in three female IT professionals has been told they are not professionally capable, that they do not understand technology, IT and coding, and should stick to secretarial jobs. According to the survey, one in five women in the IT sector has also been the victim of sexual harassment, compared to 2.5% of men. It also shows that leaders and IT training teachers are behind around a third of the harassment.

## Alarming spread

The survey, published on 4 March 2020, was commissioned by Prosa, the trade union for IT professionals. Prosa's deputy leader Hanne Lykke Jespersen calls the widespread harassment "alarming" and promises action.

"It is crucial for us to take a stand against this totally untenable situation," she says and calls on business leaders and IT training programmes to adopt clear guidelines that say harassment is completely unacceptable, and that the problem must be talked about more in the workplace.

The scale and seriousness of the problem is also recognised by the national research centre KVINFO, which publishes research on gender, equality and diversity. It produced the survey of gender equality, welfare and sexual harassment among Prosa's members.

"This and other surveys show that sexual harassment in the workplace is a big problem which concerns women in particular, and it has major consequences. It affects both the employees concerned, the rest of the workplace and attempts to make the labour market less gender-segregated," says project leader Rebekka Mahler at KVINFO.

## A gender-segregated labour market

Similar surveys document harassment in other sectors, including the restaurant trade, among commerce and office workers and in Denmark's largest trade union 3F, where 20% of female members have been victims of sexual harassment from either colleagues or a boss.

KVINFO sees a growing will to expose and solve the problem.

"Our experience is that trade unions, employers' organisations and educational institutions are increasingly aware of the need to create more knowledge around the scale and nature of sexual harassment, and for how to change this culture," says Rebekka Mahler.

Labour shortages in many sectors have led to a recruitment drive to get more women to apply for jobs which traditionally have attracted mainly men – including in the IT sector. But KVINFO believes it will not be possible to make the labour market less gender divided if workplace harassment is not dealt with.

"Simply telling women that there are exciting positions and highlighting female role models is not enough. You must get rid of harassment too. This new survey shows that harassment has an impact on women's confidence in their own skills and on their job satisfaction. It leads to more sick leave and less enjoyment. It also stunts their career opportunities and some women avoid the sector altogether," says Rebekka Mahler.

Many employees do not know what "sexual harassment" entails, or whether their workplace has policies to deal with sexual harassment and gender-discriminatory behaviour. Many also do not know what to do if they fall victim to this, shows KVINFO's survey. KVINFO encourages workplaces, trade unions and organisations to develop and put into action policies and measures to change their culture.

### **A wakeup-call**

Lawmakers have also woken up to the fact that sexual harassment in workplaces is a problem which must be solved. The Minister for Gender Equality and the Minister for Employment made a joint appeal to leaders, companies and public institutions in the wake of the #metoo movement, asking them to make sure everyone in Denmark can go to work without having to face sexual harassment.

The ministers called the #metoo stories “a wakeup call” and said fighting sexual harassment must be part of the agenda in all workplaces. Leaders and employees must become better at supporting a workplace culture where everyone is more aware of the need to relate to each other in a decent way. The ministers also said workplaces need detailed guidelines for how to deal with unacceptable behaviour, and that these must be made universally known and enforced.

Meanwhile, the Danish parliament has agreed to increase compensation for workers who have been harassed at work, and to sharpen guidelines for workplaces so that no-one can brush sexism aside by saying “that’s just the culture here”.

There is also focus on gathering more precise data on the scale of harassment, according to KVINFO. The National Research Center for Work Environment is working with changing the methods used to assess the scale of sexual harassment in the workplace.

### **Women in politics also hit**

Sexual harassment is a serious problem in the world of politics too, making women leave their political positions. Several female local politicians and parliamentarians have experienced this and spoken publicly about it. Rosa Lund, an MP representing the Red-Green Alliance, is one of them.

She regularly receives hateful, threatening or sexually charged messages. Sometimes she takes screenshots and posts the messages on social media, she told the TV2 programme “Woman – know your voice”.

On her Facebook page, Rosa Lund also writes that she knows that other women have received such messages, and that she knows women who stay away from politics because they fear sexual harassment.

“There are women who will not run in an election, who close their public profiles on social media and who completely shut themselves out from any political discourse because they are afraid of these kinds of messages. I consider it to be a massive problem for our freedom of speech and our democracy when men can sit behind a screen and threaten women into silence,” writes Rosa Lund.

One of her female colleagues is the Danish Social Liberal Party MP Zenia Stampe. She has received threats several times, and reported it to the police. Two men got prison sentences,

one for 40 days and the other for one year, for issuing threats against her.

Professor and researcher of gender and politics, Drude Dahlerup, also believes women avoid becoming active in politics because of harassment, and that this is a democratic problem.

“This is an attack on women’s citizenship,” Drude Dahlerup told the TV series “Woman – know your voice”.

### **Better digital education**

Female politicians are four times more likely to experience sexual harassment than male colleagues, in the shape of sexually explicit messages and comments on social media. This is according to a survey from September 2019, carried out by the Danish Institute for Human Rights, focusing on social media’s impact on the democratic discourse.

The survey says male politicians experience as much harassment as female politicians, but that it is directed at their political views – while female politicians are harassed and threatened with reference to their gender and their bodies. They are for instance threatened with rape, which is a far more personal and invasive form of harassment than what men experience, says the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

To reduce the level of harassment and threats that MPs experience, it is important to improve digital education, the Institute writes. It has asked the government to develop a national action plan for digital education. It will focus on basic rights and digital behaviour in the education system and in other places.



Solrun Perminow Strand, NAV Asker; Ane Stø senior advisor at NAV; Øyvind Spjelkavik and Mona Kristin Rørmold, NAV Namsdal.

## Norwegian pilot project: get work-ready in the workplace

Nordic employment authorities usually use one of two approaches when trying to help people far removed from the labour market. The traditional one is to make the job seeker “job ready” before starting work. The other is to train people for the labour market in an actual workplace.

### NEWS

04.03.2020

TEXT AND PHOTO: BJÖRN LINDAHL

Now researchers at the Norwegian Work Research Institute AFI are launching a new model, where a new role is created to make it easier to help include people who face social, psychological or physical challenges into the labour market.

Norway’s Labour and Welfare Administration NAV already supports mentors, identified by employers, as well as employment specialists, who can offer supported employment services. The latter work for NAV or its external centres and

specialise in handling challenges that might arise during inclusion work.

### Good results

“Over the past three years we have been working on a project that has provided good results. A NAV employment officer acts as a guide for the mentors in a few of the cases in his or her portfolio, while keeping his or her role as a caseworker – the person who can instigate measures on behalf of NAV,” says Øyvind Spjelkavik, the project head.

“It is important that the support comes in parallel with efforts to adapt the workplace.”

The project has been run in 39 different workplaces in Namdalen in Trøndelag and in Asker near Oslo. 43 NAV employees and 39 mentors volunteered in the project.

Out of the 49 participating clients (or users as they are known in Norway), 36 were hired, two got an internship and two enrolled in studies.

“The question is how you maintain such good results. Experience has shown that you often get good results in workplace trials,” said Ane Stø from NAV as the project report was presented in Oslo.

“But this research project is very relevant to us at NAV,” she said.

### **Three-partite agreement on inclusion**

Norway has had a tripartite agreement since 2001 where one of the aims has been to help people with physical or psychological challenges access the labour market. The agreement has been renegotiated five times. The latest agreement covers the period from 2019 to 2022. Results have been meagre, however. The report quotes NAV’s Head of Research Yngve Åsholt:

“If we look at the graph representing people outside of the labour market, it is quite honestly completely flat. This means we have a long way to go before we reach our target.”

The main problem is that NAV caseworkers are often pressed for time and do not have the necessary knowledge about the workplaces, while mentors in the workplace lack the necessary experience needed for taking care of people with problems. There is also the risk that the job specialists involved take so much responsibility for the users that a long-term natural assimilation into the workplace will not materialise.

“The new hybrid role should really just complement what is already in place. It should not replace any of the existing roles,” says Øystein Spjelkavik.

### **Voluntary recruitment**

The trial has seen NAV caseworkers volunteering to play a more important role in the workplace. Because they know which resources in terms of money and training NAV can provide, they can help improve the relationship with employers. Mentors from many different companies have also been given the chance to meet and exchange experiences.

It might seem easy, but these are two totally different approaches which often collide. NAV is part of a bureaucracy where it is important to treat all users according to the same principles and where each caseworker often manages a portfolio with hundreds of users while working in an office.

The opposite is true for the inclusion work, where the individual is at the centre and each case is unique. The challenge is to find a solution that suits the user – not to adapt the user to standardised demands. Job specialists are field workers and are responsible for fewer users, perhaps around 20.

### **Problems that can only be handled**

On a more philosophical level, this is about “tame” versus “wicked” problems. Tame problems can be complex but they only have one solution. Wicked problems cannot be solved, only handled. There is often no clear correlation between cause and effect.

“We know a lot about how to get users into a workplace and finding them a job. But we don’t know how to get them to stay,” says Øystein Spjelkavik.

Most measures are time-limited, and this was seen by many participants as the greatest obstacle for achieving results. A company might get financial compensation for hiring mentors, or employers get support for hiring people who are far removed from the labour market.

The hybrid model allowed caseworkers to choose a small selection of users from their portfolios and follow them closely while maintaining a larger personal responsibility.

### **Transfer of knowledge**

Several of those who took part in the trial project said they experienced a transfer of knowledge between the different occupational groups and between NAV and the companies.

“We learned a lot from the mentors,” says Solrun Perminow Strand, who headed the sub-project at the Asker NAV office.

“The challenge for us was to stick to the project’s aim – to focus on the workplace and not fall back on expecting the user to adapt to the job.”

Due to integrity concerns, the researchers could not contact or interview the users directly. The report is therefore based on studies and interviews with the mentors, job specialists and caseworkers.

A video from a nursery did, however, illustrate a positive story where one of the users found a job.

“Nobody else gets such close contact with the children as she does,” said Else Marit Nilsen, head of the Skoglyvegen nursery.

### **Different problems**

Mona Kristin Rømolde headed the sub-project for NAV Namdal, in Trøndelag county. She described one problem: everything seemed to go well, but as soon as the user was ready to be put on an ordinary, paid contract, you got a lot of absenteeism.

“Without the mentors, we would not have picked this up, or become aware that this is not an unusual thing to happen,” she says.

The report from the research project lists a large number of the many problems which might occur, but the general message from those who took part in the project – caseworkers from NAV and mentors – is a positive one.

"The trial shows that there is a strong will within NAV to try alternative ways of achieving inclusion," says Øystein Spjelkavik.



The MEST shipyard

## Record low unemployment in the Faroe Islands – just 296 people

Nowhere in the Nordics will you find a higher employment rate than in the Faroe Islands right now. It stands at 90%, and unemployment is only 0.9%. What is it like in a society where nearly everyone has a job, and where being unemployed is correspondingly difficult?

NEWS

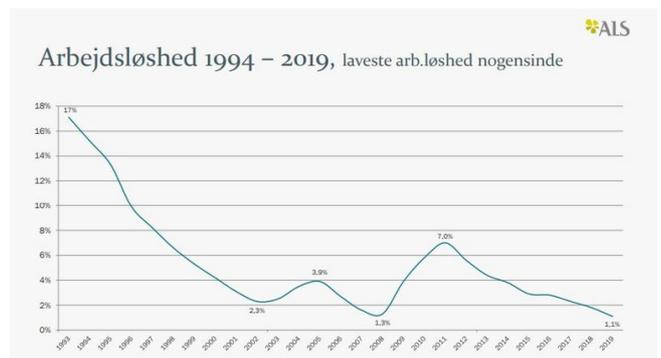
27.02.2020

TEXT AND PHOTO: BJÖRN LINDAHL

Spirits are high at the Faroese Employment Service, ALS.

“We have only had one storm so far this year. It lasted from January to February,” jokes CEO Magni á Deild Olsen.

The weather might be changeable – the day before, Torshavn was bathed in sunshine, overnight a hailstorm battered against the hotel window and now there is calm – but the economic high pressure has been steady for eight years. In 2011 unemployment stood at 7%. Since then, it has fallen year on year.



The graph shows unemployment figures from 1994 to 2019. Since it was published, unemployment has fallen further. By the end of November last year, 296 people were registered as unemployed, which represents 251 full-time positions. This meant unemployment fell to 0.9%. Source: ALS.

Magni á Deild Olsen explains that unemployment insurance was only introduced in 1992. Before that, unemployed people were given social aid. But in 1990, the Faroe Islands were hit by a severe crisis. Unemployment rose to 20%. Over a five year period, 7,000 people – 15% of the entire population – moved away from the islands. Had this happened in Denmark, it would have meant the exodus of one million people.

The crisis highlighted the need to have a buffer during challenging times. That is why trade unions and employers decided to establish ALS, or Arbejdsloshedsforsikringen in Faroese.



Magni á Deild Olsen, the ALS CEO.

“Employees at first contributed 2.5% of their salaries [to the unemployment fund]. All workers are members. It is like a tax, but we are not part of the budget agreed in parliament,” says Magni á Deild Olsen.

After a few years, the fee was lowered, and it was recently decided to lower it further to 1%. The support received by the unemployed will also increase. The fund has grown rapidly. In the past five years, as the number of employed people has risen to around 28,000, the fund has tripled in size to one billion Danish kroner (€134m).

Some worry the fund will grow so large that politicians will interfere, even though labour market issues is not a hot political potato. Parliament is busy debating more serious issues – like fish. One major issue is where the capelin has disappeared to. This is the little fish which is so important as food for cod and other bigger fish, as well as for many sea birds. In 2019 no capelin quotas were set at all in the entire North Atlantic fisheries areas. 2020 looks set to be another difficult year for the capelin.

This means there might be more money going out of the unemployment fund in future. But right now there is a desperate need for labour, especially in the construction industry.

Two new hotels are being built in Torshavn and a third is being expanded. This will double the hotel capacity and create 120 new jobs. Two tunnels are also under construction to help link the Faroes into one labour market.



Distances are shorter after several new tunnels have been constructed in the Faroe Islands, but moving from one island to another can still be a big mental step.

“As long as unemployment stays below 2.5%, employers are free to import labour from the EU and EEA. ALS must process any applications for workers from third countries,” says Magni á Deild Olsen.

Around 1,000 people from countries outside of the Nordics work in the Faroes today. 800 come from the EU, while 200 come from other countries.

The archipelago is divided into seven work areas. A job seeker is legally obliged to accept a job anywhere in the archipelago, but this is not really enforced.

“It can sometimes be difficult to get the only unemployed person to move to the other side of the archipelago. It can be easier to get a Thai worker to go there,” says the ALS CEO.

But there are other practical obstacles too. The cost of housing in Torshavn is far higher than in smaller places.

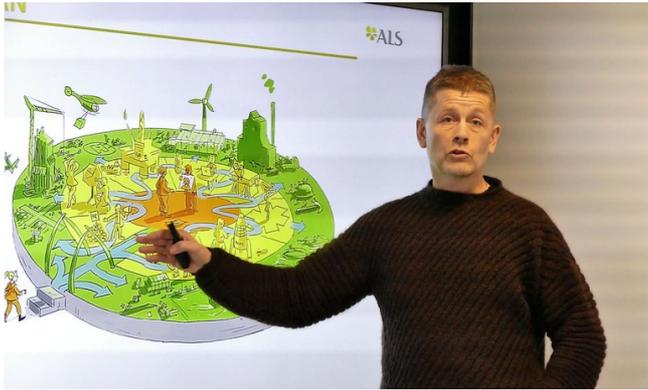
With unemployment being so low, ALS has completely changed its tactic.

“We put all our efforts into individual contact with the unemployed and discuss what is the best solution in each individual case. For many, there is only one alternative. ‘I want to work in that factory,’ they’ll say and point to the town’s fish processing plant,” explains head of department Høgni í Stórustovu.

The preparatory texts for the ALS legislation also state that ALS should use the individual’s skills as a starting point, and then go on from there.

Other types of measures are often needed to help those who do not find a job despite the extremely high employment rate.

It is necessary to widen the horizon for what types of work unemployed people would consider.



Head of department Høgni í Stórustovu with an illustration of the opportunities the labour market presents if you have enough imagination.

“We have stepped away from the bureaucratic administrator role, and have started using completely different people like therapists, psychologists and coaches. We are trying to communicate with people using trust, openness, kindness and positive expectations.

Using work-training programmes like Fjølsmiðjuna, where unemployed people can work together on projects that are beneficial to society, is one way of giving people new skills.

“For a while, ALS was the biggest potato grower in the Faroes, but we have finished doing that now,” says Høgni í Stórustovu.

In the little town of Elduvík on the north of Esturoy, there is an alternative setup. Groups of 12 are sent there to fish, go mountain climbing, do yoga and improve their self-worth.

“We have seen many good results from that,” says Høgni í Stórustovu.