



Exchange of good practices on gender equality

**Gender Impact
Assessment**
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Comments Paper - Denmark

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Gender Impact Assessment in Denmark

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and policy context of Denmark

In general the Danish population seems to believe that gender equality has been achieved at most level of society and that only a few areas needs to be reconsidered and developed further. The concrete level of knowledge and understanding of differences in women's and men's opportunities and living conditions is significantly low - also amongst politicians and civil servants.

The employment rate of women is the highest in EU – 72.4% of women and 76.5% men are working. 38.3% women work part-time while 14.3% men are having part-time jobs. The labour market is quite gender segregated regarding public and private sector, 75.3% men are working in the private sector and 52.5% women work in the public sector. Women tend to work in the areas of child care, elder care, nursing while for example the construction sector is male dominated. In areas as agriculture and fishing sectors only 10% women are represented as owners. 25% of the Danish entrepreneurs are women and only 10 % of the growing enterprises are owned by women. Surveys indicate that it is harder for women to access funding both for starting and growing an enterprise.

Women take care of most of the unpaid work at home and when looking at parental leave in relation to birth, the mothers have 93% of the parental leave even though there is a right for both men and women to share a large part of the leave. Men tend to take only the two weeks that are earmarked for them. Also women are absent of work twice as much as men due to sick children.¹

The wage gap between men and women is 16.8%. Women in general are more and better educated than men, but still they are underrepresented in top management both in the private and the public sector. In the public sector 25% of the top leaders are women, in private boards the numbers are 7-20% women. Only 7% of the CEOs in the private sector are women.²

1.2. Institutional and legal background

In 2000 the Danish law on gender equality was passed obtaining a demand on the public sector that all public planning and management should include a gender perspective and secure gender equality. The enforcement of the law has since been unsystematic and during some time, almost neglected. The main strategy in the public sector was for a long period focused only on personnel and promotion strategies of women and men. The focus on the substantial policies and progress for men and women has slowly increased during the last couple of years, but there is a lack in general of political demand and concrete knowledge of the area.

¹ Kvinder og mænd på arbejdsmarkedet. Beskæftigelsesministeriet 2011.

² Kvinder og Mænd 2011. Danmarks Statistik.

Every second year the ministries and municipalities are obliged to report on the status and progress on gender equality to the Ministry of Gender Equality and the report system has been improved last year. Still progress is slow and most of the public sector does not work systematically neither professional on improving gender equality. The Ministry of Gender Equality is planning on improving and facilitate the municipalities in order to create motivation, knowledge and examples of best practice to strengthen the local work.

A new website was created in 2012 presenting new tools and relevant knowledge in order to facilitate the public sector in general. The site contains to new approaches; namely that gender mainstreaming is an easy way to achieve better results and better quality of the services in the public sector and that it is possible to minimise costs when using the gender sensitive approach in order to be more focused in the services provided to different target groups.

The Government decided in 2013 to focus on the implementation of gender equality in the law processes, since the number of laws which was actually assessed from a gender perspective was remarkable low. Only 6 out of almost 200 laws was analysed and assessed from a gender sensitive perspective. New tools was introduced at the website and all the ministries was offered a workshop to introduce both the gender sensitive approach as a qualitative strategy of general improvement and how to use the normal procedures in law preparation with a gender perspective. The problem is that it is late in the process only to consider the impact of the law from a gender perspective when the law is about to pass in the Parliament, but the workshops included the gender perspective in such ways that the ministries was encouraged to start collecting own data and research in order to implement the gender perspective earlier in the process. It is the ministries who have the responsibility to implement the gender perspective in their work and the Ministry of Gender Equality offers support and tools only to a sudden extend. It is too soon to see the results of the work yet.

1.3. Economy

The financial resources of the Ministry of Gender Equality are limited and they offer funding for concrete projects. But the general gender sensitive strategy in the public sector has to be financed by the different institutions themselves. This means that the collection of data, initiating relevant research, assessing the gender impact etc. has to be done without explicit resources that are allocated for the purpose. So even though the gender sensitive approach can be a method of minimising costs when implemented, it requires resources at the very beginning regarding extra time spent and gathering the necessary knowledge.

Furthermore there is a lack of easy access to relevant and new knowledge within the field - both in general and within sudden areas it is almost impossible. Gender segregated data is missing and access to research results and best practice form all over the world are hard to find, since "google" seems to be the best tool. It seems to be a severe lack of collection of relevant knowledge and data, and this would be a really helpful tool for civil servants for different reasons. It would help them to understand the problems and barriers, and it would help them to address these in a professional and sustainable way.

2. Policy debate

In general gender equality is not a major theme in the Danish policy debate. There is a lack of consciousness on the severe different consequences for women and men the culture, legislation and political themes and discussions might have. It is a fact that all legislation on gender equality in Denmark has been initiated from EU Directives. Compared to the other Nordic countries Denmark is behind both regarding policy, allocated resources and the level of debates.

During the last couple of years some concrete issues has characterised the debate, such as earmarked parental leave for fathers, quotas for female leaders on boards, prohibiting the buying of prostitutes, the lapse of boys in the educational system and the cultural submission of migrant women.

As the Government came to office in 2011 they declared that they would earmark 3 months parental leave for fathers, introduce quotas for female leaders on boards and prohibit the buying of prostitutes. None of this has happened and it is not a part of the political discussions any more.

The policies on gender equality are focused on dialogue for change instead of rules and rights. The themes are boys and education, migrant women, gender mainstreaming the public sector, female leaders, men's inequality issues and women's rights on a global level.

3. Transferability issues

Both the good practices contain several themes and solutions which seems to be quite similar to the challenges every political system and administration are facing regarding the possibilities to ensure and strengthen gender equality on a national level.

The Austrian experience has different components which could very useful in a Danish context. The most important - and powerful - achievement is the integration of gender impact assessment in the national budgeting which ensures a systematic and transparent approach. Analysing national resources from a gender perspective and forcing politicians and the administration to consider macro economics with a gender perspective seems to be a very useful and strong tool.

In Denmark there is a severe lack of concrete gender equality objectives in most ministries, and the demand on all the ministries to formulate at least one measurable objective on gender equality including introduction of adequate measures would both force the politicians and the administration to work strategically and professionally with this area. One problem could be that instead of integrating gender impact assessment in all the work, the focus would be at the formulated objective only.

The Finnish system is very similar to the Danish system, and obtains a number of similar problems, especially regarding the administrative non-binding procedure, the simple approach to only differ between women and men as categories and the lack of consequences when nothing is done. But a few issues could be integrated in the Danish system.

The inclusion of top-management in the gender mainstreaming training - including gender impact assessment - would be a good and important step.

Establishing an operational gender equality working group in each ministry, which is responsible for coordinating gender mainstreaming efforts within the ministry, and which has access to the ministry's administrative and political leadership, would strengthen both the awareness of the political and administrative top and prevent the situation, where one civil servant, who is especially dedicated to the subject, bears the responsibility alone.

The efforts to ensure high-level authoritative support are important. Especially the briefing of all new Ministers on why gender impact assessment in law drafting is important and the instruction to request gender impact assessment if it is missing, seems to be an important tool to raise political awareness.