

Gender Equality: Nordic Model

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Abstract

The Nordic welfare model is predicated on all people having equal value, respect for human rights, justice, equality, good administration, low level of corruption, democracy, and promotion of health and wellbeing. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also referred to as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to eradicate poverty, protect the earth and make sure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, which development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. The Nordic countries are within the global elite when it involves being closest to achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Across international analyses the Nordic countries consistently score within the top 10. The Nordic model emphasizes society-wide risk sharing and therefore the use of a social safety net to help workers and families adapt to changes within the overall economy brought on by increased global competition for goods and services. This paper particularly aims at understanding the status of gender equality in Nordic countries, that is, SDG5. It addresses questions like why are Nordic countries in top 10 of sustainable development index? What are the ways adopted by these countries and how is it influencing the rest of the world? Is the model exportable and what are the challenges faced by these countries in achieving the SDG5. The paper concludes with suggesting way forward for these countries.

Keywords: Nordic welfare model, sustainable development goals, gender equality.

Introduction

The Nordic Region consists of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Aland.



Figure 1: location of Nordic countries on the world map

(Source: Nordic countries orthographic.svg – Wikipedia)

The initiative, called Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges, was initially flouted in 2015 when the Paris Agreement on climate change and therefore the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were adopted. As a part of the Agenda, 17 SDGs were outlined. With funding amounting to almost 10 million euro, the two-year initiative involves six flagship projects, all supported the Nordic experience – energy solutions, climate solutions, sustainable cities, *gender effect at work*, welfare solutions and food policy lab – and addresses most of the SDGs. Nordic countries have had a long-standing commitment to gender equality. The ‘gender effect at work’ programme is closely linked to SDGs 5 (‘gender equality’) and 8 (‘decent work and economic growth’).

“The [Nordic] region has proven that equal rights for women and men at work generate prosperity, productivity and economic development,” says Julia Fäldt-Wahengo, who launched the project idea and crafted the concept for it. As senior advisor, she now guides the work

ahead, while project implementation is led and coordinated by Line Christmas Moller (International press syndicate, 2017)

Understanding Sustainable Development Goals

Nordic countries have together worked for over four decades to improve gender equality in all aspects of the society. Gender between the sexes is a condition for the success of the Nordic model and a pillar of the modern Nordic welfare states.



Figure2: Sustainable Development Goal5- gender equality (Source: iKNOW politics)

At the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One of them, SDG5, focuses exclusively on improving the status and rights of women and girls worldwide and advancing gender equality. Other SDGs, however, cannot be achieved unless

SDG5 is realised including SDG1 on ending poverty and SDG8 on decent work and economic growth. As such, SDG5 is a stand-alone goal as well as cross-cutting all the other SDGs.

In the Nordic countries, the longstanding public investment in policies promoting gender equality has yielded results seen in the overall level of peace and prosperity. The point of departure for the Nordic countries has been international legal frameworks. The most important ones are the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 2011 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), as well as the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention).

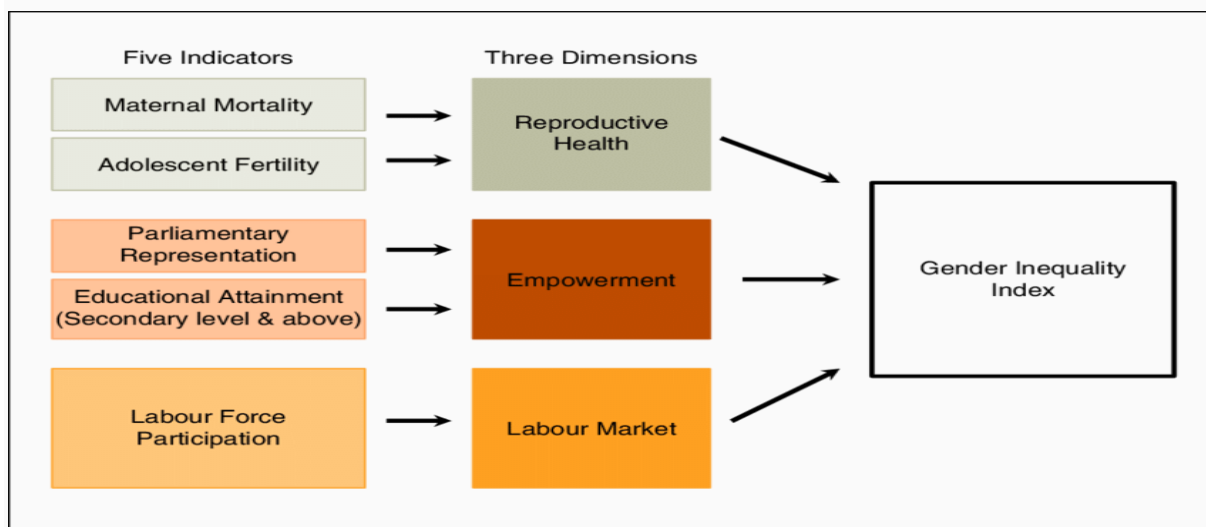


Figure3: indicators and dimensions of Gender inequality index (Source: legacyias.com)

The policies introduced to fulfil the international obligations and positive duties has generated progress towards the realisation of gender equality in the Nordic countries, the so-called *Nordic Gender Effect*, turning the Nordic countries into SDG5 frontrunners according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index. The index measures access to education and health as well as political and labour market participation of women and men. It

does, however, not measure prevention and protection from gender-based and sexual violence, and – as the #MeToo movement has revealed – a huge room for improvement remains in the Nordic countries and beyond. As such, the #MeToo revolution can be seen as the “missing” gender equality indicator measuring the level of sexism and misogyny.

The Nordic countries are committed to assist in sharing their understanding of how to advance the progress towards the realisation of SDG5 and SDG8 in particular at the advent of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action.

Overall, the experience of the Nordic countries of achieving gender equality goals has been compiled into the knowledge product – *The Nordic Gender Effect at Work* – within the framework of the Nordic Prime Ministers’ initiative, *Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges*.

On the occasion of the 63rd session of the Commission of the Status of Women, the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality hereby reiterate their commitment and long-time support to the mandate of UN Women in facilitating the realisation of SDG5 and SDG8 as well as the other SDGs that require gender mainstreaming.

We commit to delivering towards SDG5 with unrelenting vigour, ensuring delivery towards targets by 2030.

Within the scope and frame of the flagship of the *Nordic Solutions to Global Challenges – The Nordic Gender Effect at Work* – and with a focus on SDG5 and SDG8, we invite other United Nations Member States, in collaboration with UN Women, to take joint action in bringing about transformative change reaching the targets of gender equality.

Gender equality at home coincides with gender equality at work. Therefore, we commit to innovative collaboration, including with relevant stakeholders such as the social partners, around paid and shared parental leave; universal and affordable, high quality childcare; flexible

working hours and arrangements; promotion of gender balance on company boards and gender equality in leadership, and equal pay for women and men.

We commit to engage men and boys in achieving gender equality as important players in transforming gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles. Their commitment to gender equality is essential to accelerate progress.

We commit to continue strengthening our common advocacy and exchange on Nordic policies and transformative actions to promote gender equality through diverse forms of bilateral, regional and organisational partnership.

We commit to using our roles as leaders to elevate the Nordic voice for gender equality at every opportunity and platform that may bring about the required change agency and action to reach the targets of SDG5.

We commit to continue advancing our common work on knowledge transfers through innovative and transformative partnerships on models that fuel further progress on gender equality.

Recognising the link between men's violence against women and girls and gender inequality at large, we will continue building policies to end all forms of gender based and sexual violence and harassment, including by effectively responding to the realities exposed by the #MeToo movement. We recognise that women are rendered even more at risk of discrimination, harassment and violence when gender discrimination is combined with ethnic or racial discrimination and in case of women with disabilities, LGBT+ women and women who live in poverty. Throughout all our actions we will address this multiple discrimination and we will not rest until all women can live their lives free from violence and the fear of violence (Nordic cooperation, 2019).



figure 4: Nordic leaders committed to protecting women rights (Source: euobserver.com)

The Nordic Gender Effect at Work is the Nordic prime ministers' flagship project to promote gender equality as a goal in its own right, and as a prerequisite for decent work and economic growth.

There is a growing realization globally that in order to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth, societies need to harness the full potential and talent of the entire population—women and men. This is evidenced by the global commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This flagship is firmly rooted in the Sustainable Development Goals' commitment to “leave no-one behind”, and specifically linked to SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 8 on decent work.

The Nordic countries are commended for demonstrating that investment in gender equality yields well-being and economic gains. Still, there is much work to be done within the region to close the gender gap. In times when we face substantial setbacks to the progress on gender equality globally, the Nordic region is raising its voice on the matter – to share experiences and foster dialogue that can accelerate progress, globally and at home.

Pillars of the Nordic Gender Effect

Longstanding Nordic commitments to gender equality have yielded results; it has generated a *Nordic gender effect*. The flagship responds to a growing international demand for knowledge

on how Nordic models have served to engage women and men on equal terms in the labour market.

The flagship's four pillars are:

- Shared parental leave
- Quality and affordable childcare, including early childhood education enabling gender equality
- Flexible working time arrangements
- Leadership and organizational practices enabling gender equality

Goals

Through exchange and dialogue with governments, social partners and other actors, the flagship seeks to promote gender equality as a goal in its own right and as a prerequisite for decent work and economic growth. Notably, the flagship seeks to:

Firstly, Increase availability of Nordic knowledge within key knowledge areas, which may serve to enable solutions and progress in other organizations, institutions, countries and regions

Secondly, strengthen advocacy and exchange on Nordic policy and practices to promote gender equality through partnerships and high level participation in international arenas.

Thirdly, increase knowledge transfers from other regions to the Nordic region on models that can fuel further progress on gender equality at home.

Activities

The flagship focuses on activities where the Nordic countries can contribute to knowledge generation and dissemination as well as high level advocacy. To that end, a knowledge hub launched in 2018, consisting of advocacy briefs covering Nordic experiences on parental leave,

childcare, flexible work and equity in leadership, as well as videos and other online resources. Furthermore, high level advocacy and exchange in international arenas will bring together different stakeholders at panels and roundtables to address policy and models that advance women's economic empowerment.

Partners

Nordic and international partners are sought to provide valuable knowledge and function as collaborators for advocacy and knowledge dissemination, including governments, UN agencies and organizations, regional bodies, NGOs and importantly companies that are serving as change agents on gender equality in the private sector. Partners on past events include UN Women, ILO, Spotify, New America, ITUC, and NHO (Rosenberg, 2017).

Nordic Gender Effect at Work

Investments in gender equality in the labour market have made the Nordic region one of the most prosperous areas of the world. The share of women who work in the Nordic countries is larger than the global average, which is partly the effect of commitments to equal workplaces, subsidised childcare and generous parental leave. With The Nordic Gender Effect at Work briefs, the Nordic region seeks to share its collective experience in promoting gender equality at work, and enable more knowledge sharing and progress towards the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Subsidised childcare for all

The introduction of quality, affordable childcare is a key reason so many women are in paid employment in the Nordic countries. A distinctive feature of Nordic childcare is that it is available to all children – regardless of family structure, finances and parents' employment.

Childcare in the Nordic region is provided by well-trained staff and characterised by highly professional care and learning environments.

The world average, and the fees that families pay are relatively low and affordable for every parent. For example, an average Swedish family with small children spends 4.4 per cent of their net income on childcare. The corresponding figures for the United States and the UK are about 26 and 34 per cent.

Share of Nordic children enrolled in childcare per cent of age group (2016). Source: Nordic Statistics 2019

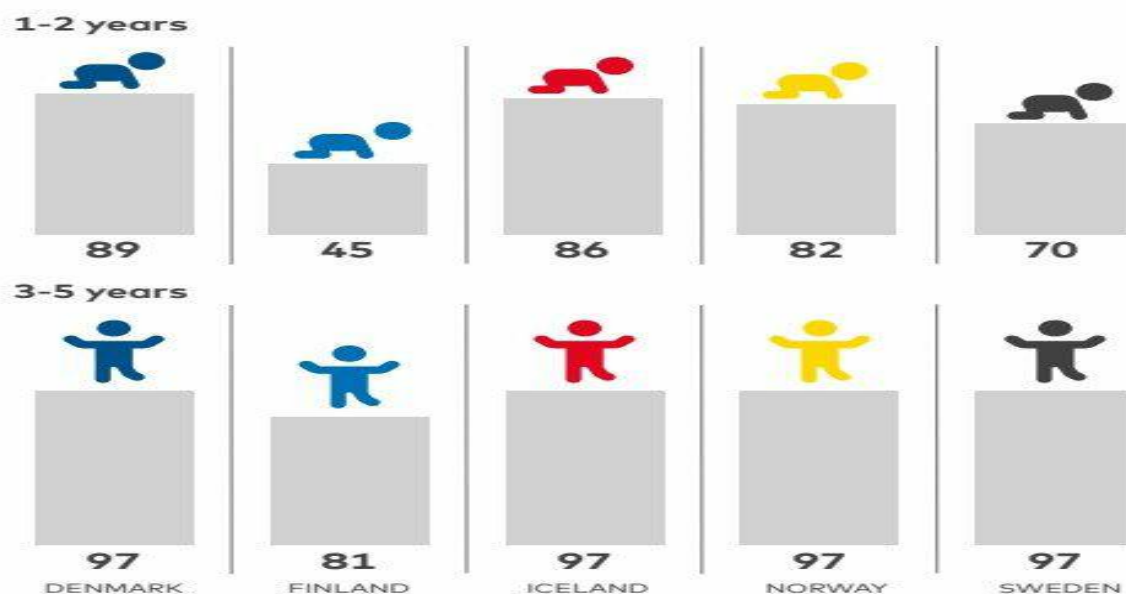


Figure 5: share of Nordic countries enrolled in children (Source: Nordic statics 2019)

Nordic countries grant parents a so-called childcare allowance and s, most parents in the Nordic countries see childcare services as a natural part of life. Research shows that this is not a coincidence; the Nordic childcare model has contributed to a dual-earner system where both parents are able to both work and take care of their children.

Organisation of childcare services: Nordic childcare typically involves a wide range of actors. Parents have access to both municipal and private childcare options. The latter type can be either for-profit or non-profit. The educational models on which the childcare services are

based vary by country. One notable feature of the system is that there is a high degree of decentralisation to local authorities when it comes to implementation of national policy. Another is that parents are mainly offered full-time childcare instead of part-time childcare, which in turn facilitates full-time work for parents.

Childcare fees often income-based: The fees parents have to pay for childcare vary across the Nordic countries. In all countries, however, childcare services are highly subsidised and based on a rights approach – it is a legal requirement that all families be able to afford childcare. In several of the countries, the fees are income-based and parents are offered sibling discounts. For example, in 2015, Norway introduced a new rule capping a family's childcare fee for the first child at six per cent of the family's total income.

High quality and democratic values: All early childhood education services are based on the ideals of democracy, equality, cooperation and independence. This approach is in line with the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which stresses that all children have the same rights and equal value and may not be discriminated against for any reason. Nordic childcare centres are operated by well-educated pre-school teachers and childcare workers with a high level of professionalism.

The right to childcare after parental leave: Almost all 3–5 year-olds in the Nordic countries are enrolled in some type of childcare services. Even many children aged 0-2 spend time in childcare outside the family. The governments have ensured a smooth transition between parental leave and childcare. In all Nordic countries except Iceland, parents are entitled to childcare for their children after their parental leave.

Shared and paid parental leave

Both mothers and fathers are entitled to paid parental leave in the Nordic countries. In order to promote and facilitate gender equality at home and in the labour market, efforts have been made at the political level to encourage parents to divide the leave time equally. These

efforts have yielded results: Nordic fathers take more parental leave than fathers anywhere else in the world.



Figure 6: share parental leave taken by fathers (in %) in Nordic countries

(Source: twitter.com)

Organisation and quotas: All Nordic countries except Iceland offer a special paternity leave that fathers can take immediately after the birth of a child to stay home with the newborn baby and the mother. If the fathers do not use the quota, the family loses the weeks reserved for them. It can also be used by the other parent in same-sex couples in several Nordic countries. The quotas have also influenced people's thoughts and attitudes regarding paternity leave.

Equal sharing: The Nordic countries promote an equal sharing of parental leave between women and men. Several initiatives have been taken at the political level to encourage parents to share their parental leave more equally, and the efforts have been successful. Over the past 15 years, men's share of the parental leave has increased in all Nordic countries. Iceland, Norway and Sweden are the OECD countries with the most even distribution of parental leave between men and women.

Level of parental benefits: In all Nordic countries, parents are compensated financially for the income they lose during their parental leave. The compensation can be income-related or a fixed amount. The exact level of income-related compensation varies greatly. Norway and Denmark have the highest level of compensation, and Finland the lowest.

Parental leave, attitudes and level of education: While the earmarked paternity leave is taken up by men in all sectors of the labour market, fathers are more likely to go on longer-term parental leave when both parents have high levels of education, or when the father has lower or the same income as the mother. Research shows that attitudes to paternity leave are becoming increasingly positive among parents, the general population and the social partners in all Nordic countries. Many different actors in the labour market are taking initiatives to encourage men to go on parental leave.

Families outside the norm: Nordic family benefits systems are built around the notion of heterosexual, nuclear families, and this can have unintended effects on families that do not conform to this norm. In Finland, only fathers who live with the child are entitled to parental leave. Thus, the system is not adapted to parents who do not live together.

Flexible work arrangements

Flexible work arrangements enable parents to successfully combine work and family life. The Nordic countries have a strong tradition of collective bargaining, which has resulted in relatively good working conditions, flexible working hours and the right to paid vacation. Nordic companies offer more flexible working hours than anywhere else in Europe.

Collective agreements and laws: The rules concerning parental leave, vacation, pension benefits and flexible work arrangements have already been decided and will be specified in the relevant collective agreement. A collective bargaining system with strong social partners has been a prerequisite to the ability to build resilient and healthy welfare states in the Nordic region. Employees in the Nordic countries are legally protected against discrimination in the

workplace and the labour market such as salary-related discrimination, asking a person about pregnancy, family plans or marital status during a job interview, refuse to offer a position to a qualified job applicant for a pregnancy-related reason.

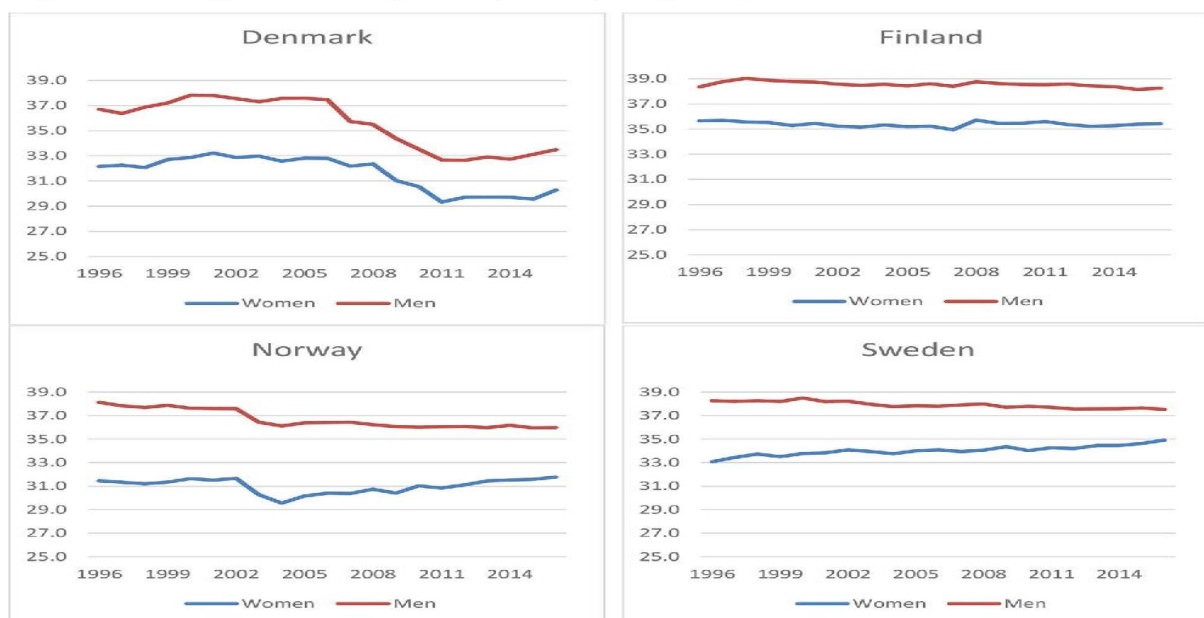


Figure 7: working hours' trends in Nordic countries (Source: semanticscholars.org)

The right to flexible working hours: The exact nature of the flexibility varies depending on the sector and the type of work and also includes the ability to work from home or to leave work for a few hours. In Sweden, employees with children under eight years of age can reduce their weekly working hours by 25 per cent. In Norway, employees with children under ten years of age have the right to request a part-time work schedule.

More work part-time: In fact, about one-third of women in the labour force in the Nordic countries work part time, except in Finland, where it is just one in five. One reason part-time work has become so common in the Nordic region goes back to the expansion of the welfare state in the 1960s.

Work flexibility increases with education: Studies show that there is a strong link between an employee's level of education and access to flexible work arrangements. Workers with a

university degree tend to have greater control over their working hours and are more likely to occasionally work from home. Women continue to spend more time than men on unpaid household and care work in the Nordic countries.

Leadership and equal opportunities at work

Equal opportunities in the workplace have been high on the Nordic political agenda since the 1970s. Many initiatives have been launched to ensure women and men's equal opportunities at work and for leadership at all levels. Today the Nordic region stands tall in international rankings on gender equality at work.

Laws and countervailing measures: As early as 1921, Denmark adopted a law on equal access to employment for men and women, and by the 1970s, the issue of gender equality began to feature on the Nordic political agendas in earnest as all five countries gradually adopted laws and promoted policies to ensure equal opportunities for women and men at work. Today, all Nordic countries have laws mandating equal pay for work of equal value, as defined by the ILO's Equal Pay Convention (C100). In addition, in several Nordic countries, employers are required to actively promote gender equality and equal treatment to prevent discrimination.

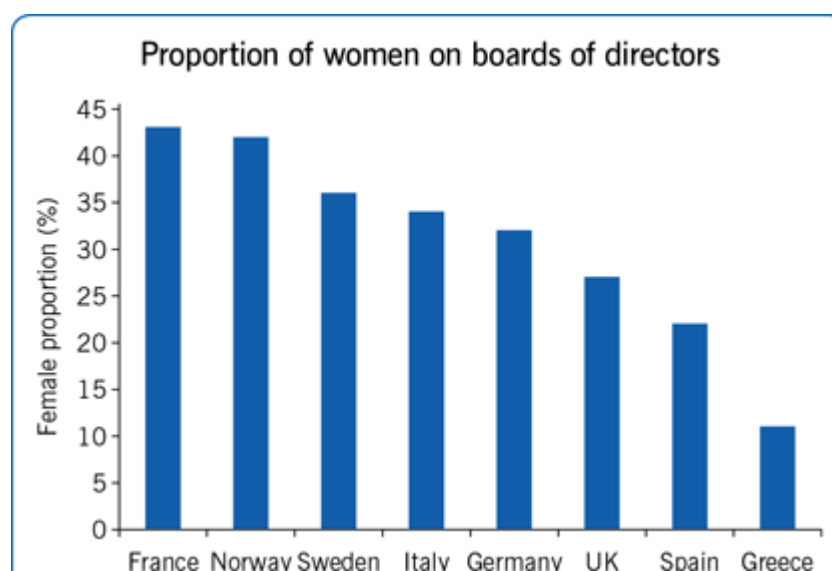


Figure 8: Proportion of women on boards of directors (Source: wol.iza.org)

Women in leadership positions: All have much higher proportions of female members of

parliament than the international average. Norway was the first country in the world to introduce a gender parity quota law for company boards (all company boards must consist of at least 40 per cent women). Several countries have been inspired by the Norwegian model (Belgium, France, Greece, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Germany and Austria) (Nordic council of ministries, 2018).

GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT 2020

According to the OECD, almost three in four working-age women in Nordic countries are part of the paid labour force, and policy-makers explicitly support gender equality at work, at home and in public. Nordic countries all benefit from a developed welfare state and foster forward-thinking initiatives, which support women joining, or returning to, the workplace.

GLOBAL GENDER GAP INDEX RANKINGS 2020		
Rank	Country	Score
1	Iceland	0.877
2	Norway	0.842
3	Finland	0.832
4	Sweden	0.820
5	Nicaragua	0.804
6	New Zealand	0.799
7	Ireland	0.798
8	Spain	0.795
9	Rwanda	0.791
10	Germany	0.787

figure 9: global gender gap index 2020 (Sources: drishtias.com)

The Global Gender Gap Index benchmarks 153 countries on their progress towards gender parity in four dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival and Political Empowerment. The Index aims to serve as a compass to track progress on relative gaps between women and men on health, education, economy and politics. Through this annual yardstick, the stakeholders within each country are able to set priorities

relevant in each specific economic, political and cultural context. Over the Index, the highest possible score is 1 (equality) and the lowest possible score is 0 (inequality).

Iceland has been the frontrunner on the Global Gender Gap Index for 11 years in a row. It has closed almost 88% of its gender gap, followed by Nordic neighbours Norway, Finland and Sweden. (Drishti IAS, 2019).

Iceland

Iceland maintains its superiority as the world's most gender-equal society, a position it has now held for a decade. Progressive childcare policies mean that women in Iceland aren't faced with a choice between work or raising children. Universal childcare and generous parental leave policies - women and men both get 90 days leave - help to remove the burden of childrearing from mothers.

When it comes to closing the gender pay gap, Iceland ranks No 1 for 'Wage equality for similar work', but 26 for 'Estimated earned income'

Norway

Supportive parenting policies and heavily subsidized childcare provision have led to a high percentage of women entering the workforce. Since 2013, mothers and fathers have been obliged to take at least 14 weeks employment leave following the birth of a child. Gender quotas legislate for a 40% female presence in the country's parliament and on business boards, resulting in a strong female presence – Norway's prime minister, minister of finance and minister of foreign affairs are all female, while women make up 41% of the C-suite

Sweden

Sweden has the most generous parental leave policy in the world, with parents entitled to share 480 days - or around 16 months - paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child. This is just one of the initiatives that have helped the nation close 82% of its gender gap. In 2016, the number of Swedish women equalled males in ministerial positions for the first time and it ranks No 1 in the index for this.

Finland

Finland has the fourth greatest gender equality of any nation, with 82% of its overall gap closed. It is the only top-ranked Nordic nation to fully close the gender gap in educational attainment. Women make up 42% of Finland's parliament and 38.5% of ministers, which accounts for the nation's strong political empowerment rating (Wood, 2018).

ACHIEVEMENTS

Rising inequality is one of the biggest social and economic issues of our time. It is linked to poorer economic growth and fosters social discontent and unrest. So, given that the five Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – are some of the world's most equal on a number of measures, it makes sense to look to them for lessons in how to build a more equal society.

The Nordic countries are all social-democratic countries with mixed economies. They are not socialist in the classical sense – they are driven by financial markets rather than by central plans, although the state does play a strategic role in the economy. They have systems of law that protect personal and corporate property and help to enforce contracts. They are democracies with checks, balances and countervailing powers.

Nordic countries show that major egalitarian reforms and substantial welfare states are possible within prosperous capitalist countries that are highly engaged in global markets. But

their success undermines the view that the most ideal capitalist economy is one where markets are unrestrained. They also suggest that humane and equal outcomes are possible within capitalism, while full-blooded socialism has always, in practice, led to disaster.

The Nordic countries are among the most equal in terms of distribution of income. Using the Gini coefficient measure of income inequality (where 1 represents complete inequality and 0 represents complete equality) OECD data gives the US a score of 0.39 and the UK a slightly more equal score of 0.35 – both above the OECD average of 0.31. The five Nordic countries, meanwhile, ranged from 0.25 (Iceland – the most equal) to 0.28 (Sweden).

The relative standing of the Nordic countries in terms of their distributions of wealth is not so egalitarian, however. Data show that Sweden has higher wealth inequality than France, Germany, Japan and the UK, but lower wealth inequality than the US. Norway is more equal, with wealth inequality exceeding Japan but lower than France, Germany, UK and US.

Nonetheless, the Nordic countries score very highly in terms of major welfare and development indicators. Norway and Denmark rank first and fifth in the United Nations Human Development Index. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden have been among the six least corrupt countries in the world, according to the corruption perceptions index produced by Transparency International. By the same measure, the UK ranks tenth, Iceland 14th and the US 18th.

The four largest Nordic countries have taken up the top four positions in global indices of press freedom. Iceland, Norway and Finland took the top three positions in a global index of gender equality, with Sweden in fifth place, Denmark in 14th place and the US in 49th.

Suicide rates in Denmark and Norway are lower than the world average. In Denmark, Iceland and Norway the suicide rates are lower than in the US, France and Japan. The suicide rate in

Sweden is about the same as in the US, but in Finland it is higher. Norway was ranked as the happiest country in the world in 2017, followed immediately by Denmark and Iceland. By the same happiness index, Finland ranks sixth, Sweden tenth and the US 15th.

In terms of economic output (GDP) per capita, Norway is 3% above the US, while Iceland, Denmark, Sweden and Finland are respectively 11%, 14%, 14% and 25% below the US. This is a mixed, but still impressive, performance. Every Nordic country's per capita GDP is higher than the UK, France and Japan. (Hodgson, 2018).

INFLUENCE ON OTHER COUNTRIES

Nordic co-operation on gender equality has contributed to enhancing knowledge and helped strengthen co-operation between the countries. The role of Nordic co-operation on gender equality is also to support the countries' co-operation on their international obligations and to create synergies between the Nordic countries.

ORGANISATION INVOLVED

The Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality (MR-JÄM) has responsibility for Nordic gender-equality co-operation. The Committee of Senior Officials for Gender Equality (ÄK-JÄM) is responsible for preparing business for and implementing the decisions of MR-JÄM. The annual Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers is responsible for the activities of MR-JÄM and ÄK-JÄM. The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers is presented in the annual sectoral programme, which sets out activities aimed at achieving the goals of the co-operation programme. The Nordic Council of Ministers' organ of co-operation, NIKK (Nordic Information on Gender), is tasked with highlighting and disseminating gender-equality research, policies and practices from a Nordic perspective. NIKK also manages the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality's funding programme for projects that generate added value in a Nordic and gender equality perspective.

PUBLIC SPHERE

Women and men have equal access to and opportunities to influence and participate in decision-making processes and in the design of the Nordic welfare societies. The Nordic Region is well known for the relatively high proportion of women in its parliaments and governments – the result of a process going back more than a century, aimed at increasing women’s representation both within and outside the political system in each Nordic country.

Women and men in the Nordic countries have equal access to and opportunities to participate in the media.

The sexualisation of public space is counteracted. Identity is affected by the ways in which men and women, boys and girls are portrayed in the mass media, in culture and communication. One key issue is how gender stereotypes are mediated and reinforced by the media, including social media.

The backlash against gender equality is countered, as is gender based hate speech. In the Nordic Region, there is a degree of debate regarding structural inequalities between women and men, girls and boys, the extent to which they have been removed and who benefits from them, but the debate is often based on prejudices. This can be countered by stressing the rights, obligations and opportunities of both genders, by discussing gender equality and by raising awareness of structural inequalities.

WELFARE AND INNOVATION

Gender equality is a prerequisite for both innovation and welfare. Innovative social solutions to promote gender equality have strengthened the development of the Nordic welfare societies.

The Nordic countries seek to ensure that:

Firstly, women, men, girls and boys in the Nordic Region have equal access to education, learning and research, in order to develop their personal ambitions, interests and talents. Girls and boys should have equal access to education, and their educational choices should not be affected by gender stereotypes. Another important aspect of gender-equality work in schools is access to study counselling that is not gender-biased and which provides a basis for non-gender-based education and career choices.

Secondly, women and men in the Nordic Region have equal opportunities to participate in the labour market and to be economically independent. Nordic gender-equality policy has long sought to create equal conditions for women and men in the labour market. Women and men should have equal opportunities to choose and reach high positions.

Thirdly, Women and men in the Nordic Region have equal opportunities to combine family life and work. Striking a balance between work and family life is a challenge for both women and men. There is a need for a more equal distribution of childcare responsibilities and work, as well as equal opportunities for leisure activities and voluntary work.

Fourthly, there will be a zero-tolerance approach to gender-related violence. Combating gender-related violence also requires preventative measures such as promoting changes in attitudes and stereotypical gender roles. This work must involve all relevant stakeholders, including official agencies, the private sector, the media and civil society.

Fifthly, Knowledge of the health of women, men, boys and girls is improved, and that women, men, boys and girls have equal access to health care, social services and opportunities for good health and well-being. Issues affecting health and well-being need to be monitored with a view to ensuring equality of health for women, men, girls and boys (Nordic council of ministers, 2015).

Key Challenges

Early Childhood Education

Although the Nordic countries have come a long way when it comes to solutions for affordable and quality childcare, a sustainable and gender-equal system for early childhood education is still not a reality. The Nordic region therefore wants to invite others to a discussion on how the following challenges can be effectively dealt with.

Staffing levels and quality The quality of childcare is often measured in terms of staffing levels, or number of children per teacher in a childcare group. In some Nordic countries, it is a challenge to recruit enough childcare workers to meet the needs of the expanding sector.

Sex-segregation in care Over 90 per cent of the childcare workers in the Nordic countries are women. How can the gender balance be effectively and rapidly improved?

Availability and access Several Nordic countries are facing challenges in meeting the demand for childcare. In particular, there are difficulties making childcare available exactly when parents need it, such as at the end of their parental leave. New children need to be enrolled throughout the year, but most spots become available at the end of the terms.

Paid Parental Leave

Although the Nordic countries have come a long way when it comes to paid parental leave for all new parents, several important challenges remain. The Nordic region wants to invite others to a discussion on how these challenges can be effectively dealt with.

Involved fatherhood Although the Nordic countries are moving in the right direction, mothers continue to take much more parental leave than fathers. The right to long and flexible periods of parental leave can become a gender equality trap if only women utilise it. How can men be encouraged to take more parental leave and become more involved in the care of children?

Care of parents and other family members The ability of parents to combine parenthood with a career has been a central aspect of the Nordic welfare model. One issue that has not

received the same attention is that many adults (women in particular) take on the bulk of caring responsibilities for their ageing parents or other family members, in addition to their own children. What are the implications of this dual care role on women's participation in the labour market, particularly in the light of an ageing population and increasingly longer life expectancy?

Make the parental leave equally useful for non-traditional families People in the Nordic countries live in a great variety of family constellations, including LGBTQ families and single-parent households. What are the unintended effects of current parental leave schemes on families that do not conform to the heterosexual, nuclear norm?

Flexible Work Arrangements

The Nordic countries have come a long way when it comes to flexible work arrangements, yet several important challenges remain. The Nordic region wants to invite others to a discussion on how they can be effectively dealt with.

Sustainable work-life balance Workplaces are becoming increasingly fast paced and stressful. The opportunity to work from home or other remote locations does not automatically mean that people work less. How should we achieve a sustainable work-life balance?

Good working conditions There is an increasing number of workers, in the Nordic countries and globally holding precarious jobs or who are not covered by collective agreements or flexible work arrangements. There is often a pattern in terms of who holds these jobs, such as age, gender and immigrant background. How can we ensure an inclusive labour market with good working conditions for everybody?

Flexibility and gender equality. Flexible work arrangements do not automatically translate into increased gender equality at home, particularly where share of domestic work is concerned. Studies show that women continue to spend more time than men on unpaid housework. How can the work flexibility be arranged so that it helps improve gender equality both at home and in the labour market?

Equal Opportunities in The Workplace

The Nordic countries have come a long way in ensuring equal opportunities in the workplace as well as in promoting women's leadership, yet several important challenges remain. We want to invite others to a discussion on how they can be effectively dealt with.

Differences in pay The gender pay gap in the Nordic countries remains stubbornly consistent, despite the fact that the countries have come a long way in a global context when it comes to gender equality in the workplace.

Distribution of unpaid housework Women in the Nordic countries spend considerably more time than men on unpaid housework, childrearing and elder-care. Research shows that it is easier for women to pursue a career when there is a more gender-equal division of household chores. How can men be persuaded to do more unpaid work at home?

The limitations of quota rules Studies of the Norwegian quota law show that the improved gender balance seen in company boards has not spread to more women CEOs or other managers. One reason for this is that the business world is characterised by a wide range of leadership standards and traits that are typically (perhaps stereotypically) associated with men. How can we foster an environment where both women and men can hold top management positions? (Nordic council of ministers, 2018).

Can it be Exportable?

The Nordic model has undoubtedly increased the share of women participating in the labour market and women's economic independence. However, the labour market remains characterised by a high degree of occupational segregation. The work that has traditionally been carried out by women – often unpaid work in the home – is now being undertaken by women in the public sector in the form of childcare, healthcare and eldercare. A large share of Nordic women works part-time – in many cases not by choice – at the same time as they continue to carry out the majority of the unpaid work at home. Another challenge is that society

and the rest of the world have changed since the Nordic model was established. Today, the labour market is characterised by greater mobility, digitalisation and competition from low-wage countries. Publicly subsidised welfare systems and universal solutions for all residents have been challenged by ideas of a more market-oriented system. There is a trend toward insecure jobs, precarious work and a growing number of workers lacking the protections offered by collective agreements. This is increasing differences in people's working conditions, often depending on factors such as age, gender and immigrant background. For instance, migrant women from outside of Europe continue to face real barriers in accessing and entering into the formal Nordic labour market. The promotion and development of decent working conditions in the Nordic region co-evolved with an expansion of people's access to social benefits. The challenge is to maintain sound working conditions for all workers, even in a rapidly changing world of work, and to continue to stand up for social protection systems as a means of combatting inequality.

Clearly, the Nordic countries have achieved very high levels of welfare and wellbeing, alongside levels of economic output that compare well with other highly developed countries. They result from relatively high levels of social solidarity and taxation, alongside a political and economic system that preserves enterprise, economic autonomy and aspiration.

Yet the Nordic countries are small and more ethnically and culturally homogeneous than most developed countries. These special conditions have facilitated high levels of nationwide trust and cooperation – and consequently a willingness to pay higher-than-average levels of tax.

As a result, Nordic policies and institutions cannot be easily exported to other countries. Large developed countries, such as the US, UK, France and Germany, are more diverse in terms of cultures and ethnicities. Exporting the Nordic model would create major challenges

of assimilation, integration, trust-enhancement, consensus-building and institution-formation. Nonetheless, it is still important to learn from it and to experiment.

Despite a prevailing global ideology in favour of markets, privatisation and macro-economic austerity, there is considerable enduring variety among capitalist countries. Furthermore, some countries continue to perform much better than others on indicators of welfare and economic equality. We can learn from the Nordic mixed economies with their strong welfare provision that does not diminish the role of business. They show a way forward that is different from both statist socialism and unrestrained markets (Hodgson, 2018).

WAY FORWARD

Key solutions enabling gender equality Gender equality in the labour market requires more than just a battery of initiatives aimed at enabling women to engage in paid work. There is also a need for laws and policies facilitating gender equality within workplaces. Since the 1970s, all Nordic countries have established a set of national gender equality goals covering a wide range of areas, including the labour market. The right to equal pay for work of equal value as per the ILO's Equal Remuneration Convention (C100) is enshrined in law, and gender-based discrimination as per ILO's Non-Discrimination Convention (C111) is prohibited. It has also been deemed important to ensure equal distribution of power and influence in the labour market, and to increase the number of women in management positions. The various interventions and initiatives promoting gender equality are closely linked and interdependent. The availability of childcare allows both parents to be employed. Both parents taking parental leave enables women to return to work sooner, helps to reduce long career interruptions for women, and normalises men taking care of children on their own. Anti-discrimination laws contribute to preventing negative career consequences of parental leave, and proactive initiatives to break men's dominance at the top of workplace hierarchies help to correct

imbalances caused by men previously having had better opportunities to work and pursue a career. The multitude of Nordic solutions for gender equality is also present in the autonomous regions of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. These countries have similar social protection systems to the five Nordic countries, meaning they are tax-funded and universal, as well as gender equality policy objectives, subsidised childcare and parental leave systems in place. The labour markets in the Faroe Islands, Åland and Greenland diverge from the other Nordic countries' labour markets in significant ways, among other things in terms of size and geographic and demographic conditions (Nordic council of ministers, 2018).

Conclusion

This paper explores about the Nordic countries model of gender equality, underlying concept and innovation regarding delivering towards SDG5 with unrelenting vigour, ensuring delivery towards targets by 2030. Nordic countries are moving ahead in terms of gender equality and thus, it is important to understanding the model and innovations of their working towards achieving gender equality. It is worthy to note that Nordic countries have emerged as an example amidst of growing inequality or unsustainable development model adopted across the rest of world.

This paper has also highlighted the challenges faced by these countries for implementing the policies regarding achieving SDG5 and thus, these countries must look at some other ways to resolve those issues including some of which are suggesting in this paper. Nordic countries have long to go in terms of their aim to achieve sustainable development goals by 2030 but there is less doubt that their situation is still better than other countries.

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