Title: Report on Gender Impact Assessment & the Employment Strategy in Denmark
Country: Denmark
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The definition of a gender impact assessment, according to the EC’s guide to gender impact assessment is

‘To compare and assess, according to gender relevant criteria, the current situation and trend with the expected development resulting from the introduction of the proposed policy.’

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To formulate this report regarding guidelines on gender impact assessment of employment policies is at the same time an easy and a difficult task. Easy, because one can quickly ascertain the remarkable lack of overall employment guidelines regarding gender in the present Danish employment strategy. The difficulties of course lie in explaining the absence of these guidelines in Danish employment policy. What is the significance of their absence? - Are they understood in Danish employment policy in general? - Or are they completely overlooked?

My conclusion is, as I will illustrate below, that gender is not contemplated in the Danish employment policies.

1.1 Background - the Danish employment policies

Danish employment policies are in essence financial policies - with the primary object of creating a financial basis for the Danish welfare state, within which most benefits are universal, generally available to all citizens and independent of personal insurance schemes.

In the `National plan for employment 2000´ the most important targets for development have mainly an economical content and are in short as follows:

- The surplus on the public finances is to be maintained at over 2 per cent of GDP and public debts are to be reduced significantly in per cent of GDP
- The growth in public sector employment is to be moderated compared with recent years.
- The labour force is to be increased significantly - with about 80000 person from 1998 to 2005.
- Unemployment is to be stabilised at a level about 5 per cent of the labour force and at the same time the development in wages should be moderated.
- The number of persons on transfer income should be reduced significantly - with 60000 persons from 1998 to 2005.
- Foreign debts are to be reduced.
- The tax burden must be reduced.

(NAP 2000,1.2)

There in general an anxiety in Denmark regarding the demographic change, caused by the generations with the high birth rate (after the second world war) becoming pensioners, and the low birth rate generations (the result of the low fertility in the eighties) emerging on the labour market. Doubts, regarding the financing of the welfare state in general and the old age pension in particular for the large number of coming senior citizens, emerge constantly in the political debate, most recently in the closing discussions before the referendum on participation in the common European currency. Women are more concerned as they, as opposed to men, are less likely to have an employment pension.

As stated in the NAP 2000 `the critical point in employment strategy is whether it will be possible to obtain the necessary growth in the labour force´ (NAP 2000,1.2). At the same
time it is important that this growth is followed by a high degree of employment. However the big question is, where the rise in employment should come from. In NAP 2000 it is stated that the development of the inclusive labour market must proceed simultaneously with the reorganisation of taxation geared to make participation in the labour force more attractive. Young persons, adult (long-term) unemployed persons and weak groups of unemployed persons must be involved to a greater extent in the labour force through job training. At the same time the number of persons leaving the labour market on disability pension should be reduced, as well as it is necessary to retain a higher percentage of persons over 50 years old as well as over 60 years old in the labour force.

The Danish labour market policy is thus apparently gender neutral. It seems that in the overall labour market strategy only age and qualifications are of central importance, while gender is non-existent.

1.2 Background - the labour force -  
Why a gender dimension is not important from an employment point of view

Since World War II, the labour market activity rate in Denmark has been almost constant at a level of 70 % with a slightly rising tendency. The male activity rate however has fallen through the whole period in all age groups, and the constant high labour market activity and employment rate is alone due to the rising female participation in the labour market. Women are now almost to the same degree as men, labour market active and in employment. The development through the last 20 years is illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1: Activity rates for women and men (aged 16-66 years) in 1981 and 1999.

With regard to an increased recruitment to the labour force, women as a group are thus of little interest. Furthermore women as a group are of less interest because women's education points to employment in the public sector, where the government according to the NAP 2000 wants a moderate growth compared with recent years. Women already form 65 per cent of the employed in the public sector, and almost 50 per cent of the women are employed by the public sector. (See table 1)

Table 1  Women and men in employment by self employed employees in the private and public sector. January 1999.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self employed</th>
<th>Employees - private sector</th>
<th>Employees - public sector</th>
<th>In total per cent</th>
<th>In total number of persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1263083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>1479157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table contains all persons in employment. The RAS 1999 doesn't give a break down in age groups of employees by the public and private sector. The number of persons in employment under 16 years and over 66 year form however only 9 per cent of males and 8 per cent of females in employment, which (even if these persons had quite another distribution than persons in the age group 16-66 years) wouldn't spoil the overall impression of an overrepresentation of women in the public sector. Assisting spouses is part of employed person in the private sector.

An analysis of persons not in employment shows instead recruitment potential among the young, the older, people with poor education and the marginalised. It may also be feasible to recruit part-time labour among the group on disability pensions and to retain the middle aged and seniors in the labour force for a longer period eventually on part-time arrangements. Relatively few persons (as for instance housewives) are supported by their families alone -. (See fig. 2.)

It is obvious from the figures, that the number of unemployed persons is relatively small compared to the number of persons outside the labour force. A growth in the labour force require an earlier recruitment of the young persons outside the labour force - and that a larger proportion of the persons over forty are maintained in the labour force - if necessary in part- time jobs. The problems outside - and within - the labour market that may occur by including a higher percentage of younger, older, and weaker groups is not up to discussion in the overall labour market policy - and certainly not from a gender point of view.
Figure 2  Women and men (aged 16-66 years) in the labour force on leave, in active measures and in unemployment - and - outside the labour force on pension, early retirement and social benefits - and others January 1999.

Note: Others include housewives, persons living only on the black economy, dropout etc.
The number of part-time jobs in Denmark has however decreased. Previously a large proportion of women had part-time jobs. Early in the 70’s women were extensively included in the labour force, many in part-time employment, and later gradually intensively in full-time employment. The part-timers of today are mostly persons under education or seniors gradually leaving the labour force. The lowest part-time proportion of employed women is to be found among the age group 30-40 years where we in Denmark find the mothers with small children.

**Figure 3** Employment and part time rate for women and men (aged 16-66 years), January 1999.

Considerations regarding potential problems resulting in the participation of women in full time employment in the labour force on such a massive scale at a time of life when they also have the responsibility for their children have been almost absent in the Danish employment policies. It is noted simply that, as in the Danish NAP, ‘the principle of equal opportunities for women and men (the mainstreaming approach) has been integrated in the Danish legislation in the fields of labour market policy and taxation, as this legislation is based on the individual person… The high degree of coverage in the field of child care services is one of the reasons which explain why the activity rates and employment rates of both man and women continue to be the highest in an international context’. (NAP 2000,1.3.4.2).

On the other hand there is a growing concern about the gender based wage gap in the public as well as in the private sector, and there has however been a certain amount of
focus on the fact that equal opportunities is not the same as equal results. Women’s large scale introduction into the labour force has not resulted in the same positions and wages as men in spite of legislation regarding equal pay for equal jobs or jobs of a similar value. (Legislation no. 639 of July 17’ 1992). The minister for labour has in three conferences on equal pay in the autumn of 1999 pinpointed this problem. These conferences have been the closest anyone has come to anything that might relate to gender impact assessment of employment policies on a national level. This initiative has lead to an agreement among the social partners of an analysis with the aim of identifying barriers at the labour market causing this discrimination (Arbejdsmisteriet 2000).

Further more there is a growing awareness of the dilemma of families with children. The social partners have concluded an agreement for the next four years including ‘the question of modernisation of the organisation of work, access to part-time work, life long learning and the terms for employment of persons with reduced capacity for work’ (NAP 2000, 3), and in discussion of this more flexible organisation of working time it is mentioned, that it is important to ‘ensure a better combination of family and working life and to have access to child care facilities outside normal opening hours’. (NAP 2000, 1.3.3.5).

1.3 Background - the Danish Labour Market Model

Why the gender dimension is absent in the national employment policy

As mentioned in the NAP 2000 'The Danish labour market model is characterised by being a multi-string system based on agreements, collective agreements and legislation. The social partners play a central role in the determination of pay and working conditions... traditionally, the social partners are also involved in connection with legislation and not least the administration of legislation, both at the central and regional level.’ (NAP 2000, 3). The social partners’ negotiation is mainly concerned with wages, working hours and holidays. The proposals of a more general character, put forward by the individual union tend to disappear before reaching the final negotiations between the social partners at national level. The government legislates on labour market conditions- such as maternity leave and other types of leave (including parental leave), and attempts with varied success to regulate the size of the labour force.

Co-operation between the social partners and the government exist at various levels - national and regional. The essential targets for this co-operation in the National Labour Market Council has been to conduct a labour market policy with the following two aims:
• to ensure that the enterprises will be able to recruit the necessary labour
• To ensure that the unemployed are offered of a job or are offered an upgrading of skills necessary to secure employment. (NAP 2000,1.3.1.13)

Co-operation at regional level functions through the Regional Labour Market Council and is administered by the regional labour market agency. Since 1981 an equality consultant has been posted in each of the regional agencies. The equality consultant’s activities are organised and co-ordinated by the National Labour Market Council. The equality consultants’ job was initially to ensure that women had access to the male dominated work areas - and later in general to contribute to break down the gender segregated labour market through projects at a local level.
It was thus recognised at a very early stage that it was necessary to view the developments in the labour market from a gender point of view. However, this may have had the consequence, that there has been no need of the new concept of mainstreaming the Danish labour market policy. The areas concerning equality policy and gender equal opportunities and access to the labour market were the responsibility of the equality consultants. This 20 years old tradition of separating equality in the labour market from general labour market policy may partly explain the fact that mainstreaming and gender impact assessment are not an integral part of Danish employment policy. Sjørup states that the department in the ministry of labour responsible for national employment plans and their annual revision has never introduced a gender dimension in their activities - partly from the assumption that women do not have any special employment problems. The strategy of mainstreaming thus functions primarily at a declamatory level while, at the same time there is little activity at the practical level. (Sjørup 2000). It may well be the equality consultant institution’s present structure - combined with the belief that the institution is actually mainstreaming and assessing employment policy - that constitutes the greatest barrier for genuine mainstreaming of employment policy on a national level.

The initial aim in employing equality consultants was mainly to help women out of the high unemployment of the late 70’s, where the increase in the unemployment rate in general was considerable. At this time the female unemployment rate was for the first time since World War II higher than the male unemployment rate. Women were to be channelled over in work areas described as non-traditional, in other words the traditional male work areas. (Arbejdsdirektoratet 1982). The Danish Equality Council, founded in 1975 had already at an early stage pinpointed the gender segregated labour market, and requested that the minister of labour should initiate changes in that area. The agenda for the equality consultants at first was thus to guide women away from their marginal position in the labour market into male dominated areas. This agenda was a few years later combined with the aim of moving women’s employment away from the public sector, as the ruling conservative coalition wished to slow down the growth of this sector. Some years later (in 1985/86) with a drastic fall in unemployment and a resulting lack of qualified manpower in the traditional male trade areas, a third agenda emerged - that women should contribute to prevent the bottleneck problems in the traditional male trades. (Emerek and Ipsen, 1997).

Part of the male trade strategy was implemented in co-operation with the joint Nordic BRYT project, the aim of which was to develop and test methods to break down the gender-segregated labour market. It is however, difficult to find the positive results from this male trade strategy. The unemployment rate for the women who entered the male areas was and still is considerably higher than that of their male colleagues. (Holt 1988, Emerek and Ipsen 1997). It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the male trade strategy was a miscalculated equality policy designed to serve a range of other goals other than equality. One could however, from a positive angle, regard the male trade strategy as the first - if somewhat clumsy - attempt, to embark upon an employment policy with the aim of altering the gender composition within the trades and the gender segregated labour market. There is no doubt that this was the first attempt in implementing a gender impact assessment of the employment policy - both before, during, and after the employment policy was implemented.
1.4 Background - from equality to mainstreaming and gender impact assessment?  

*Is there any genuine mainstreaming in the Danish employment policy?*

It can be argued that gender to a certain extent is integrated in the new initiatives on development of the new IT education programs - one of the aims is to attract more women to this form of education (NAP 2000) There is however more focus on gender in the new programme ‘Developing Entrepreneurship’. It is directly mentioned in the Danish NAP, that ‘Women’s contribution to the national economy could be even bigger with better framework conditions for women who wish to set up their own business’ (NAP 2000,2.2,7.1). Is this just another employment policy disguised as equality policy based on the knowledge, that women are underrepresented among entrepreneurs - the male trade strategy once more in a new disguise?

Equality consultants have continued, through various local projects, to try to break down the barriers of the gender segregated labour market - and have with a certain success increased the female participation in male dominated areas and also the male participation in female dominated areas in their regions.

The question is however if gender segregation is only a disadvantage - ex. with relation to wage development? Kold believes that the answer is ambiguous, and that gender segregation in certain situations may be an advantage and a stronger bargaining position in relation to wage development. At the same time the majority of gender integration experiments have ended with a return to gender segregation - though with a new structure and up to a point a new content, but still with inequality in working conditions as the consequence. (Kold 1999).

The equality consultants have however recognised - also inspired by the demand for mainstreaming from EU - that gender and equality aspects must be an integral part of general employment policy. They have, through their work in the regional areas, amassed a broad knowledge on monitoring and analysis of the employment policy. (Arbejdsmarkedsstyrelsen 1998). This knowledge could with advantage be included in the national employment policy. A systematic use of the many years of experience would contribute to the making of a more adequate gender impact assessment prior to the implementation of various employment initiatives. The labour market reform of 1993 is a perfect example of legislation that could have benefited from a gender impact analysis, based on the amassed experience of the equality consultants, and could have predicted the potential gender discrepancies before the legislation was implemented. This labour market reform is used as the case in example 1.

In Denmark the list of equality initiatives is long with many examples of good as well as not too good practice. An example, which includes good as well as not so good practice, is the case of the biannual compulsory reports on equal status and opportunities. Each and every municipality and county are since 1997 required submitting these biannual reports to the Ministry of the Interior. The intention of these reports are to keep the citizens and the employed of municipalities and counties informed on equality and equality policy. (Danish Equality Council 1999). Some make very informative and detailed report, others give this work less priority. One Municipality has as the Danish partner in a project on
mainstreaming given the work top priority. As this work is a typical example of good practice at regional level it is chosen as the second case, example 2.

Another development in the Danish debate on equality is the rising focus on men and the role of the man. The relatively large interest in relation to equality of the relatively small number of men, who have been marginalised and are out of the labour market can also in this context be seen as part of the growing focus on potential groups, that can be recruited to employment and thus contribute to the Danish economy. On the other hand it is obvious, that in a society where women in less than two generation have altered their roles to both providers and carer in the family require that men also redefine their roles - otherwise the conflicts between family life and working life will be huge and the families will have problems in surviving. It is important to focus on this issue also in relation to labour market policy, so there are not only created family friendly work places - but also family friendly employment and labour market policies. The question is however how much weight this issue should be given in the future mainstreaming policy. According to Sjørup the strong focus on men is an omen that the Danish Equality discourse is in a crises. It can not be remodelled to a mainstreaming discourse based on an assumption that the most important is fathers and the role of the family (Sjørup 1999).

Year 2000 marks a new area in Danish equality policy. After 25 years of function an Equal Status Department, A Debate Forum and a Knowledge Centre have replaced the Equality Council for Equal Opportunities. It gives new possibilities for assessment of gender impact before, during and after the implementation of a policy. The change in institution mark as well that it is time to review the Danish equality discourse - and according to gender and employment - it is hardly possible to solve equality-problems without seeing them as an integrated part of problems at the labour market as well as an integrated part of problems outside the labour market.

In Denmark we have brilliant statistical remedies, we have registerbased labour marked statistics supplemented by surveys (though lack of immediate available information - and sometime annoying lacks of breakdown on gender) - we have gender expertise - we have new institutions. At the same time we have understanding of equality as equal opportunities - not as equal results (though there has been a growing awareness of the gender gap). Our greatest barrier is (in my opinion) that we have grown gender blind, lost the sight of gender inequality, dissected gender and equality in so many dimensions, that we cannot 'see the wood for trees'.

1 The Danish Equality council held in February 2000 as is last arrangement a conference on men with the title ‘Breadwinner or dependent?’ The focus was on the development in roles of the breadwinner and carer as well on marginalised men. The Danish Equality Council published furthermore in 1999 an anthology an men.
Example I. The Labour Market Reform of June 1993
An example of a 'gender neutral' legislation with a gender discrepancy.

The Labour Market Reform of June 1993 marks a change in the Danish employment policy. It meant a drastic change in administration of the labour market policies through a higher degree of regionalisation. At the same time by use of action plans, there was introduced a new method to organise efforts in relation to the unemployed. This reform has later been followed by similar reforms. One of the central tools for renewal was the limiting of the period the unemployed can receive unemployment benefits. This example will only deal with the first reform of June 1993.

I.1 The development up to the Labour Market Reform of June 1993

The unemployment rate for both men and women had with few fluctuations shown a growing tendency since the mid 70', and apart from a short period in the middle 80' it was growing fairly fast. The unemployment rate had in 1993 reached 11.3 per cent for men and 13.7 per cent for women. But there were however large variations in unemployment in the labour force. The highest unemployment rates were 24.4 per cent for members of KAD (women's trade union) and 23.5 per cent for SID (trade union of special workers) while the Danish trade union of nurses experienced the lowest unemployment rate at 0.9 per cent. (Statistics Denmark 1999).

I.2 The unemployment trends

There was no indication what so ever, that the unemployment trend would alter course without any intervention, and there were no indications that the unemployment situation would change for the hardest hit trade unions KAD and SID who's members mainly are employed with non-skilled work, and who represent almost 20 per cent of the labour force.

I.3 The policy of the Labour Market Reform of June 1993:

In order to turn the tide the Danish Parliament (Folketinget) introduced a labour market reform to tackle the unemployment trend. The important elements in this reform were in short:

- The opportunity of early retirement was introduced for person between 50 and 55 years old. In the period 1994-1996 unemployed persons in this age group could join a special scheme of early retirement benefits amounting to 82% of the highest unemployment benefit.

- Another element of the reform was the possibility of up to one year paid leave for education, sabbatical or child care, the leave schemes of education and child care were open to unemployed persons as well as persons in employment. Compensation for the education leave was 100% of the highest unemployment benefit (but reduced to 80 per cent in 1995), while compensation for child care and sabbatical leave was 80% in 1994,
reduced to 70% in 1995 and 60% from 1997. The sabbatical leave scheme closed in the latter part of 1999.

- As mentioned earlier, an important aspect was the new limit of the period a person was allowed to stay on unemployment benefit. The reform introduced a limit of 9 years (it is later reduced to 4 years in 1999). At the same time job training and activation measures was intensified (activation and job training rules have moreover been tightened up since the reform).

There was no special gender dimension in the reform.

I.4 The overall impact of the Labour Market Reform of June 1993

The impact of the reform was immediately evident. Unemployment figures dropped to 9.0 per cent for men and 12.0 per cent for women in 1995 - and to 7.8 per cent for men and 10.1 per cent for women in 1996 - and they have kept falling. Outside Denmark this labour market reform is recognised as being very successful, because unemployment has been declining since the reform. Labour market researchers in Denmark give the reform part of the credit for the reduction (Kongshøj Madsen 1999).

The impact of the reform was however also a reduction of the labour force, that made small improvement in employment look like big successes when they was measured by the declining unemployment rate.

Another result was fall of retirement age - especially for women. The retirement age was the lowest in the year of 1995 with 57 years for women and 60 years for men. The paradox is that the government now is fighting a heroic battle to raise the retirement age, as unemployment has reached the lowest level in 25 years.

I.5 The impact of the Labour Market Reform of June 1993 according to gender

Though the reform's intention was to be gender neutral - the result of the reform turned out to have a gender discrepancy.

The retirement age dropped to 57 years for women and 60 years for men in 1995 with the introduction of the special early retirement scheme, and since then women constitute more than two thirds of the people receiving early retirement benefits (see table 1).
Moreover the legislation on leave had also generally a gender discrepancy. Women constitute also here more than two thirds of the participants in the sabbatical and educational leave schemes since its introduction. In the parental leave scheme women constitute the majority. Furthermore the development of female participation shows a slightly rising tendency in the parental scheme as well as in the educational scheme from 1994 to 1998. The less attractive the scheme is, the greater is the percentage of female participation (see table 2).

Table 1 Women and men (50-55 years old) on special early retirement scheme 1994-1998.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Women in percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>8449</td>
<td>73.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>23438</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>46049</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>41922</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>36170</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>30528</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: From 1999 the figures are not broken down on gender.
It was only possible to enter the scheme in 1994-1996

Table 2 Women and men on parental, educational and sabbatical leave 1994-1998.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parental leave</th>
<th>Educational leave</th>
<th>Sabbatical leave</th>
<th>Leave in total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of participants</td>
<td>Women in percentage</td>
<td>Number of participants</td>
<td>Women in percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>35791</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>12272</td>
<td>69.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>42135</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>32502</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>30580</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>31415</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>22228</td>
<td>92.8</td>
<td>23882</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>19624</td>
<td>93.0</td>
<td>22856</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>13826</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>13826</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: From 1999 the figures are not broken down on gender.

The labour market reform in 1993 has thus a genuine gender discrepancy that could have been predicted before implementation, by means of gender impact assessment.

The parental leave scheme has as an extra agenda, to better conditions for families with children, but as Olsen shows, the parental leave is only a tool in the labour market policy and it does not promote equality as it is mostly used by women. This means that women may loose contact with the labour market and the equality between women and men have difficult conditions. She argues that the leave schemes must be changed so that men also will find them attractive. (Olsen 1997) The question is however if it is the schemes that are the problem.
Though it is assumed and argued in the NAP, that Danish men and women have equal opportunities according to legislation, as the practical aspects of child care are fulfilled by nurseries and kindergartens part of the time - women and men act differently according to the leave schemes. Various explanations of this phenomenon have been brought forward:

- One explanation is the different waged - men earn more - this normally also applies to the spouses in a family.

- Another explanation is based on the different expectations to men and women in the gender segregated labour market. At the male dominated labour market - the man is the norm, and leave caused by birth and children are more visible and thought of as handicaps. At the female dominated labour marked leave caused by birth and children are seen as annoying but also as a necessary evil (Kold 1997). As most women are employed at the female dominated labour marked, it seems in general more acceptable they take the leaves regarding children.

- And finally, the leave schemes are used though it means a considerable drop in income - for women too. Time is in short supply - and more valuable in certain periods of a life cycle than others. The introduction of women as full-time employees in the labour force has in actual fact the result that the two breadwinner family has had an increase of more than 50 per cent in working hours (compared to a one-breadwinner family) in spite of the fact that the working hours for the individual have been reduced by 25 per cent. This increase in working hours leaves less time for other aspects of life.

I.6 The indirect impacts of the Labour Market Reform.

The legislation on parental leave has had unintentional consequences for the labour force. One of these became obvious very quickly. Quite a number of nurses did choose to take parental leave and unemployment among Danish nurses, which already was among the lowest dropped 50 per cent and was in the period from 1994 to 1997 between 0,4 and 0,5 per cent. Many hospitals were short of nurses.

The equality consultants pinpointed another problem namely ‘the leave trap ‘- the difficulty of returning to the labour force after a long absence with parental leave eventually combined with unemployment. The equality consultants in the Frederiksborg-region discovered that in unemployment funds, where a high rate of paid leave was combined with a high unemployment rate, the unemployment figures for women in the age group 25-39 years showed a weaker falling tendency compared to other unemployment funds.

Immigrants in Denmark - especially women - have as whole lower labour market participation than the other section of the population. At the same time they have a high unemployment rate, which has not dropped as much as the unemployment rate for the rest of the population. It appears that the differences between the unemployment rates are getting smaller at the moment. The result for women is however for some of the large immigrant groups due to the fact that the activity rate has made a huge drop from early 90' to late 90', while the increase in the employment rate has been low. For female immigrants
from Turkey the activity has dropped from 63 per cent to 46 per cent in the period, while
the employment rate has only increased 2-3 per cent. So what looks like a success may
indeed be a failure - if the policy is to include more persons in the labour force. We do not
yet know the reason for this drop in activity rate. It may be due to the intensifying of
activation.

1.7 Changing policies/follow up policies

The recognition of the existence of ‘the leave trap’ has motivated the regional labour
market councils to an early activation of the unemployed women, who have had a
considerable absence from the labour market on the grounds of maternity and parental

2 After the latest revision in 1998 the mother has the right to maternity leave 4 weeks before the birth
and 24 weeks after. She is obligated to take leave 2 week after birth. The father has the right to
paternity leave 2-week after the birth and in the week 25 and 26 after the birth. Moreover part or all
the leave in week 15 to 24 after the birth can used by the father instead of the mother.
Example II: The Ringsted project - Equal treatment in employment
An example of mainstreaming at the regional level

The Ringsted project is the Danish part of a Nordic project on mainstreaming, initiated of (Nordic Council). The objectives of the Nordic project were to develop strategies to integrate the equality dimension in youth policy and the labour market policy in the Nordic countries in the future. The objective of the Ringsted project is to influence the behavioural pattern with regard to decision taking, that can point toward alterations in the gender distribution, and as a result bear influence on the decision makers to contemplate gender consequences - especially in questions of employment. It is underlined that the goal is not a question of equal numbers of male and female employed by the municipality.

Ringsted Municipal has had a co-operation with the Danish Equality Council during the project. (Ligestillingsrådet 2000)

II.1 The position of men and women prior to the Ringsted project.

The municipal sector is an important part of women's labour market - more than 25 per cent of all employed women are employed by municipalities, where they represent more than 75 per cent of the work force. The gender segregation within municipal employment is also high. 40 per cent of the women employed by municipalities are engaged in care and welfare work - where they represent 90 per cent of the work force. (Statistic Denmark, RAS 1999)

I Ringsted, a small town of 18 000 inhabitants east of Copenhagen, women represented 77 per cent of the employees in the municipal. In the home care areas 92 per cent were women while men dominated the technical areas representing 93 per cent of the work force. (Ringsted 1999).

A conference for the employed in the municipality of Ringsted focused on the fact that the municipality is a female dominated work place, and asked questions as:

- What is the advantage of a gender integrated work place?
- How do we use each other’s resources better as men and women - and as human beings?
- How can we develop the work places in the municipality from a gender perspective? (Ringsted 1999)

Based on these and other questions a project was formed on equality in staff recruitment.

The objective of the project in general was however 'to focus the need of the human resources of both men and women... see gender differences as a potential - as people, who have similar points of view seldom progress as people who think differently ... and to create a stimulating work places with equal opportunities for women and men in the municipality' (Ringsted 1998, authors translation). Thus the objectives were based on difference and in-homogeneity. This is in opposite to the Danish gender ideology, which is based on similarity and homogeneity (Kold 1997).
II.2 Employment trends in municipalities

Within the last 20 years the number of persons employed by municipalities has been fairly stable, the women's part of the employed tends however to be increasing. (Statistics Denmark 1999)

II.3 Why focus on staff recruitment?

The equality committee in Ringsted municipality chose to focus on recruitment procedures. The project's axis was focused on job criteria and recruitment. 'In recruitment situation, there is a golden opportunity for the leader and staff to discuss the relevant qualifications the work place possesses - or lacks - or wishes to acquire - viewed from an equality perspective, work place culture, assets and norms.' (Ringsted 1999, authors translation). In this way the recruitment situations was not only a goal in it self, but also a mean in creating consciousness on gender equality.

The project started in January 1998, and in November 1998 the municipality launched the booklet, 'gender integration pays' to all employees in Ringsted municipality, with the challenge 'put on the gender spectacles' (Ringsted 1998).

II.4 The potential impact of the Ringsted project

The aim of the project was to recruit persons from the underrepresented gender to positions in the municipality. As women were over-represented in most areas, this could however potentially mean fewer jobs in the municipality for women. The focus on gender difference and in-homogeneity also contains the potential problem, that it may well be used to recruit and prefer men for traditional female jobs (as e.g. kindergarten teacher) - but at the same time it can brand women's qualifications as less useful for more technical purposes. It is the experience of the Danish equality consultants that the concept of difference, in-homogeneity and specificity are applied when recruiting men into traditional female jobs, whereas the concept of uniformity, homogeneity and similarity is used, when women try to get into male dominated job areas. (Petersen 1997)

II.5 The result of the Ringsted project

The result of the Ringsted project can be measures in different ways - quantitative as well as qualitative. It is yet too early to evaluate the effect of the general aim of the project of creating a mainstreaming in the municipality. The results of staff recruitment in the project period are difficult to evaluate as well. There is no available information from former periods in the main report. A tentative summary of the findings regarding staff-recruitment is however given below.

In the period January- August 1999, the number of applicants and job vacancies were registered. There were 127 vacancies in the period and 1580 applicants for these jobs, 75 per cent of the applicants were women, and they got 81 per cent of the jobs. 112 of the
vacancies were existing jobs, of which women held 85 per cent earlier. A success for mainstreaming - or?

The statistics published in the main report (Ringsted 1999) are not easy to interpret. But a recalculation of the figures given in different connections through the text gives the following results in table 1.

Table 1: Number of applicants and employed women and men, and the rate of success of applications. January-August 1999.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education:</th>
<th>women</th>
<th>men</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>applicants</td>
<td>employed</td>
<td>success</td>
<td>applicants</td>
<td>employed</td>
<td>success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>per cent</td>
<td>per cent</td>
<td>numbers</td>
<td>per cent</td>
<td>numbers</td>
<td>per cent</td>
<td>numbers</td>
<td>per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upper secondary (kort)</td>
<td>25 (296)</td>
<td>20 (20)</td>
<td>7 (7)</td>
<td>10 (40)</td>
<td>4 (1)</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocational (erhvervsrettet)</td>
<td>37 (438)</td>
<td>32 (33)</td>
<td>8 (8)</td>
<td>27 (107)</td>
<td>13 (3)</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium-cycle higher (mellemlang)</td>
<td>12 (142)</td>
<td>31 (32)</td>
<td>22 (22)</td>
<td>25 (99)</td>
<td>58 (14)</td>
<td>14 (14)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long-cycle higher (lang viderergaende)</td>
<td>7 (83)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>27 (107)</td>
<td>17 (4)</td>
<td>4 (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known education</td>
<td>81 (1185)</td>
<td>89 (103)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>395 (24)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I total</td>
<td>1185 (1185)</td>
<td>103 (103)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>395 (24)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Ringsted (1999) chapter 4.5 Statistics
Note: Education seems not to be known for all applicants.

The figures show a tendency, that women apparently have a higher rate of success in getting a job in areas where there is no need for a higher education - whereas men seems to have an advantage in jobs which require a higher education. Still, the figures are based on a short period of time, and they are hardly significant. They do not however indicate a change in recruitment.

Fiig suggest in her comments on the project, that the mainstream-concept is unclear, and that it is problematic to use a concept which neither in English or in Danish translation gives an immediate meaning. It makes it difficult to communicate to persons, not familiar with equality-discussions (Fiig 2000).

II.6 Indirect impacts?

It is still too early to tell from the findings of the project if it will have indirect impact on special groups. The aim of the project is to recruit persons from the underrepresented gender to positions in the municipality. This could potentially mean fewer jobs in the municipality for women, as women are over-represented in most areas. The figures from the project period do not contradict this hypothesis.
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