

Comments from the Gender Equality Commission to the Faroese Report on the Implementation of CEDAW in the Faroe Islands

The Gender Equality Commission appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Faroese report on the implementation of CEDAW in Faroese society.

General comments:

Overall, the Gender Equality Commission finds that the report is marked by the absence or very limited scope of statistics and general information about gender equality and women's issues in Faroese society.

From our position it seems that gender equality is not a core priority for the Faroese Government, neither when it is about political initiatives, nor sufficient funds and staffing.

Furthermore, the Gender Equality Commission recommends that the competent authorities make more of an effort to disseminate information about CEDAW, including the CEDAW Committee's recommendations and comments regarding compliance with CEDAW in the Faroe Islands. CEDAW is very little known in Faroese society.

Comments by article:

The Gender Equality Commission would like to make the following comments to the report from the Faroese authorities:

Article 4

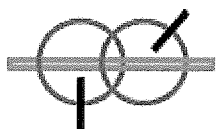
Demokratia

The Gender Equality Commission believes that Demokratia should be given the opportunity to continue its work to encourage women to participate in political decision-making, also between parliamentary and municipal council elections.

Article 5

Banning Stereotyped Perceptions of Gender Roles

The lack of equality for women is actually often linked to customary thinking and prejudices, which are tied to customs and the perception of what position men and women should and do have in society. An important aspect of promoting equality for women is dismantling such perceptions of gender roles.



The Gender Equality Commission believes that the Faroese authorities should do more to influence and change customary thinking and traditional perceptions of gender roles.

Article 7

Men and Women in Management

The Gender Equality Commission recommends implementing measures to balance the number of men and women in managerial positions. Women's rising level of education is not reflected in wages and, similarly, they do not seem to have had much impact on the great inequality in management. The number of men and women in senior and middle managerial positions remains highly unequal and there are no signs that change is underway.

Precise statistics are not available, however, and a study should be carried out to facilitate monitoring developments. A 2007 study shows that around 12% of private and public limited company managers were women. This is a decline compared to 2005 when female directors made up roughly 14%. The same is true for board and commission membership in both the private and public sector.

Commissions and Councils

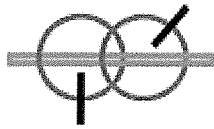
Gender distribution in public commissions was 70% men and 30% women in 2000. In 2007 the distribution was 65% men and 35% women. There has been progress, but not substantial progress considering that it has evolved over a 7-year period. Development is also uneven in the different ministries. The Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of Trade and Industry stand out, because men take up 92% and 71%, respectively, of the positions in their commissions and councils. In 2000 the figures were 93% and 72%, respectively, so there has been no improvement. It is also reprehensible that in spite of the fact that the Gender Equality Act stipulates that ministries must seek special permission from the Gender Equality Commission when appointing non-gender balanced commissions and councils only a few ministries follow these regulations.

The reasons for the lack of gender balance in commissions and councils should be further investigated. Are there factors, which make women refrain from offering their candidacy? And to what extent are these related to women themselves versus external? This matter should be highlighted by, for example, raising awareness among institutions, companies and other employers and requesting that they issue regular reports on what steps they have taken, and intend to take, to eliminate potential obstacles and encourage qualified women to take up more senior positions.

Article 11

Wage Gap between Men and Women

The Gender Equality Commission recommends launching a study of wages. There is a significant wage gap between men and women in the Faroe Islands. In total, men earn almost twice as much as women and this wage gap has remained virtually unchanged for several years. One reason for this



may be that there are significantly more men than women in the Faroe Islands. Another reason is that many more women than men work short time. A third reason is the gender-divided labour market: women are highly overrepresented in low-income groups. The question is whether this explains everything. Even though figures and studies indicate that an increasing number of women obtaining different types of education, this is not reflected in wages.

A more in-depth study is required to determine the size of the wage gap in different trades, why there is this difference, and what can be done to reduce it.

Parental Leave Grant Scheme

The Gender Equality Commission recommends reviewing the Parental Leave Grant Scheme from a gender equality perspective. Both men and women receive parental grants from the scheme. The scheme, hence, does not directly differentiate between men and women. Nevertheless, people do not accrue pension contributions during leaves covered by this scheme. Seeing as, in practice, more women than men take advantage of this scheme, this affects women disproportionately. It means that every child reduces a woman's pension savings, which, by extension, means that women, who have children, are disadvantaged compared to men, who have children, when they retire.

Labour Market Statistics by Gender

It is important that authorities, institutions, companies and organizations become more aware of generating statistics by gender. These are of utmost importance, because they facilitate calculations corrected for level of education and continuing education, work experience, seniority, working hours and other variables, which would provide a clearer picture of differences in wages and how they can or cannot be explained.

Gender Equality Board in the Faroe Islands

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