

**Does equality pay?**  
**Can gender equality and WLB**  
**promote economic development?**  
**Can gender research play a role?**

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# Background: Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS)

- Represents the interests of all Norwegian local authorities
- Participates in international projects – mainly Europe
- Presently involved in EEA and Norway Grants projects in 12 of the eligible 15 EU countries – broad range of subjects
- Very different programs and projects – different national and political contexts
- Involved in projects on gender equality and work life balance in Spain, Portugal, Slovenia
- Gender equality and Work Life Balance is an element in many projects, including a NG project in CR within the program «Decent Work and Tripartite Dialogue», focusing on threats and violence at the work place.

# 1. Direct economic consequences of gender equality and WLB

- Work life balance refers to mechanisms that facilitates the balance between work, family and private life – for men and women, e.g. flexible working hours, services for children and elderly
- Can be studied from different perspectives: human rights, democracy, economy.
- This presentation is focusing on economic perspectives



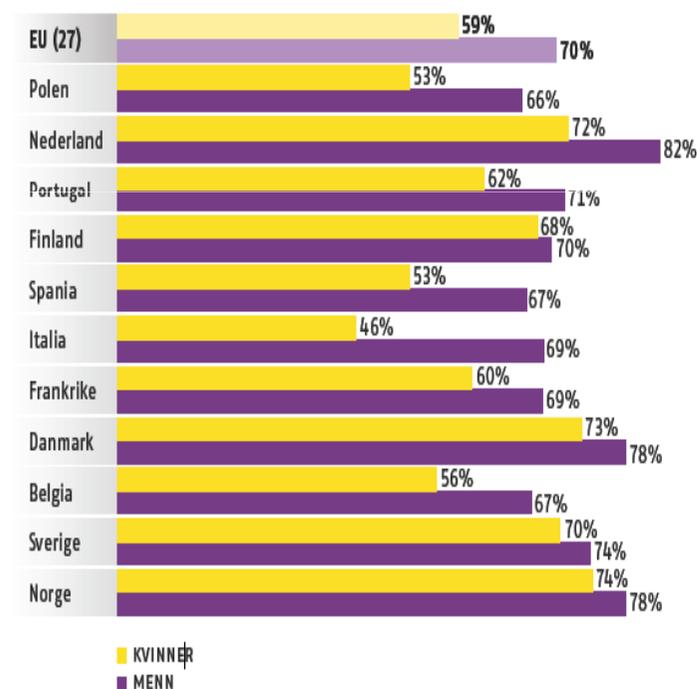
# Higher employment rate – lower unemployment rate

- WLB implies new jobs, e.g. kindergartens and institutions for the elderly
- New jobs imply higher employment rate and a flexible labour market
- Positive link between women's employment rate and Gross Nat. Prod.
- Ex: Sp: E.rate 53/67, Unemployment rate 28/56
- N: E.rate 74/78-U.rate 3

Sysselsatte etter kjønn, utvalgte land

15–64 år, 2009. Prosent

Kilde: Eurostat 2010a



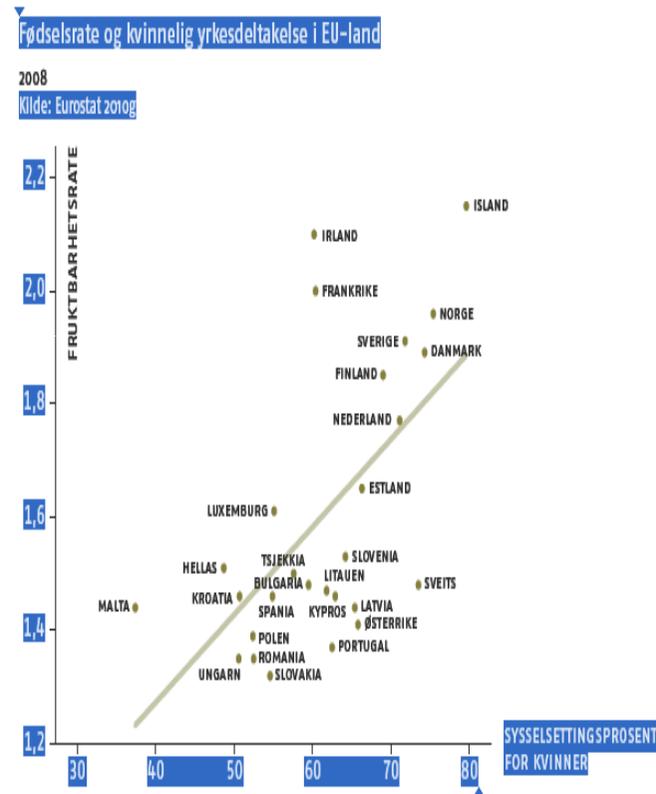
# Preventing the long term effects of unemployment

- Effects on competence and motivation of unemployed adults, youth + children, friends, siblings, parents
- Effects on pensions, benefits – and taxes
- Effects of «unregistered labour market» on business competition/quality



# Higher birth rates

- WLB makes it easier for couples to have children
- The sustainable birth rate is 2.1. The rates in Europe vary between 1.2 and 2.2.
- Low birth rate means future problems: few productive adults to support many elderly
- Ex:Spain 1.3 – Norway 1.9



FIGUR 2.7

# Better use of educated women

- Women represent the majority of university students in many countries
- Not using the potential of highly educated women is a waste of very qualified human resources and public money
- Flexible working hours and care for children and elderly makes it easier for women to work outside their home



# More taxes: more public services

- 2 salaries families generally earn more, and pay more taxes
- Taxes are the basis for all public services: schools, hospitals, kindergartens, transport, social security
- Taxes are the basis for all jobs in the public sector



## 2 salaries, higher consume – more jobs

- 2 salaries families generally earn more than 1 salary families, have higher purchasing power and consume more - especially with children
- Private consume is the basis for private sector: shops, factories, services, restaurants
- Private consume is the basis for jobs in the private sector



## 2. Indirect economic effects of gender equality and WLB

- No easy answers
- Vary between countries, cultures, traditions
- Therefore – no statements – only question marks



# Can gender balance improve profit?

- Conservative minister launched 40% quota law for pub.lim.company boards: conditional in 2003 – implemented in 2005
- Argument against: guess
- Argument: Diverse boards improve profit/competivity
- Result: 6% women board members 2003, 40% 2009.
- Female board.m: younger, more educated, more indep.



# Can gender equality provide new jobs for women -and men?

- Gender equality and work life balance may imply a new role for men in their own family – and make them interested in new professional sectors
- Example: traditionally few male employees in in care for the elderly and kindergartens
- Campaigns to recruit more men - to improve recruitment, HR balance and service quality
- Example: Father and Henrik
- Now 20% of kindergarten students in Oslo are men –



# Can child care improve competence?

- Parents' possibility for education/employment?
- Children's capacity and motivation for education – especially immigrant or marginalized children?
- Public and private sector competence in a global competitive economy?



# Can postponed retirement reduce pension expenses?

- WLB and flexible working hours makes it easier to postpone retirement
- Continued payment of income taxes – reduced payment of pensions
- More active elderly people - happier and healthier
- Example: KS: 20% over 60



# Can flexible working hours increase productivity?

- Does flexible working hours/place give more satisfied workers?
- Does more satisfied workers give increased productivity?
- Is working 08-16 more productive than 08-20?
- Example: Spain and Portugal, the tradition of «presentismo»



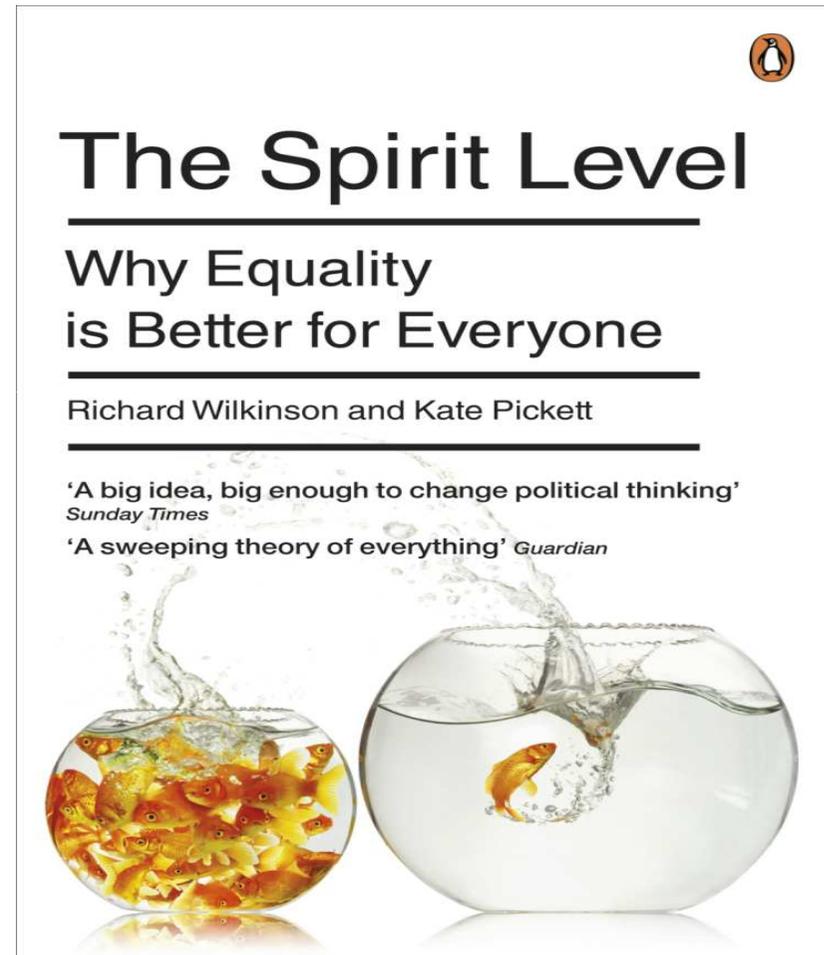
# Can flexible working hours give more voluntarism, more social capital?

- Many forms of capital, economic, cultural, social (Putnam)
- More voluntarism with 08-16.00 than 08-20?
- Example: the Polish study group and the voluntary centre – 1 of 400



# 3. Does equality within a country generally pay?

Main message: A society benefits from greater economic equality – not only the poor – but the whole population.  
Examples: Life expectancy, literacy, infant mortality, homicides, imprisonment, mental illness, drug addiction, trust.....



# Summary: main message A

- It is sometimes believed that gender equality and work life balance is a luxury that only rich countries can afford and that it is therefore not relevant in a situation of financial crisis.
- This presentation argues the contrary; that gender equality and work life balance represent substantial economic advantages, not only to the individual family but also to the national economy – very relevant during a financial crisis, e.g.:
  - More jobs, higher employment, lower unemployment
  - Higher purchasing power, higher consume , more jobs
  - More taxes, better public services
  - Higher birth rates

# 4. Can gender research influence public debate – and political decisions?

Political decisions where research has been important:

- A monthly child grant to all children, paid to the mother
- A gender quota for political decision making bodies
- The gender quota for listed private company boards
- The legal right to kindergarten for all children
- Ex:
- Portugal: Pay gap and time use

Present issue for political discussion:  
Fathers parental leave

- Presently 12 weeks
- Increasing to 14 weeks
- Fathers take it - or lose it.
- Only if the mother is working or studying
- Rapid increase since introduction in the 1980s: from ridicule - and weird minority - to majority
- Conservative party has proposed abolishing the quota and letting parents choose themselves. This has raised protests from researchers, fathers, and media

# **Extract of editorial in biggest N. newspaper**

## **Aftenposten: Keep the fathers's quota**

**“Sunday the leader of Høyre stated that she will fight to abolish the 2 weeks of the parental leave reserved for fathers. So will the party FRP, not the 2 centre parties KRF and V. We hope that the 2 centre parties win this fight. The quota is still necessary**

**There are big differences between men and women regarding parental leave.**

**Changing this pattern is important for men, women and children. This is documented.**

**More equal sharing of the parental leave contributes to a more equal working life. As the Equality Commission stated 2012, the Norwegian labour market is still gender segregated. Men also occupy the majority of the highest posts.**

**A conservative government should not abolish the father's quota, but support it by giving men independent right to parental leave.”**

**(30.7.2013)**

# Key elements

1. Researchers and institutions, interested in gender research
2. Funding possibilities for gender research
3. Institutions that market research and disseminate research through publications, meetings, seminars
4. NGOs and interest organisations that use research results in their work and lobby for changes
5. Media that publish research results, comments from NGOs, individual stories— focus on emotions and politics
6. Political parties that respond and come up with specific proposals

# Gender Research for Gender Equality? (Kilden/The Source)

- “There is an obvious connection between public gender equality work and gender research, but it is not easily defined. Gender research is in some cases directly focused on current gender equality policies and in many cases delivers new data for politicians and bureaucrats to deal with. Research is to be free from political or other influences. Still, gender research is depending on financing from public authorities.
- The principle of academic freedom and integrity, that research is to be independent of various interests, is also true for gender research. Nevertheless, this field of research has been linked to the new women’s movement during the 1970s and 1980s, and to the gender equality work of today. And it is true that gender research produces knowledge relevant for gender equality policies, and it is involved in, for example, analysis of the preconditions, the methodologies and the effects of these policies.
- Does this mean that gender research in Norway is always research for gender equality? A simple answer is no. Gender research is a multifaceted, interdisciplinary field of research with no common agenda or aim.
- Nonetheless, there is a close connection between gender research and gender equality - gender research delivers new knowledge and insights crucial for the gender equality debate and the work being done.”

# Gender Research in Norway

- Most of the research and teaching in Norway is carried out in traditional academic departments and institutions within humanities, social sciences, technology and medicine.
- The research takes many shapes and names; e.g. women's studies, feminist research, critical men's studies, masculinity research, queer, gay and lesbian studies, gender research.
- Gender research in Norway has traditionally included the labour market and the welfare state, family and care, health, violence, education and rural development. It is well represented in disciplines such as history, literature, sociology, pedagogy, medicine, law, theology and technology.
- Ethnicity, sexuality, and race are crosscutting issues.

# Organisation of research

Several national organisations, networks and institutions within gender research promote or work for the research community, or conduct research themselves:

- KILDEN is the Norwegian Information and Documentation Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research. KILDEN is responsible at the national level for promoting and informing about Norwegian gender research both within Norway and abroad.
- The National Council for Women's Studies and Gender Research, established by the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions
- Various networks and programmes focused on diverse research topics
- Gender research in Norway is also presented through NIKK, the Nordic institute for women's studies and gender research, the Nordic Association for Women's Studies and Gender Research and the European networks and organisations ATHENA, WISE, and WINE.
- FOKK - a NGO for gender research. Membership is open to anyone who is interested

# Ideas for study tour to Norway

1. Researchers and institutions: ex. Gender Research
2. Funding possibilities: ex. The Norwegian Research Council
3. Institutions that market and disseminate research: ex. Kilden
4. NGO and interest organisations that use research results in their work and lobby for relevant policies: ex. NHO
5. Media that publish research results, comments from NGOs, stories illustrating the research: ex. Aftenposten
6. Political parties that respond to the research and come up with specific proposals : eg. The present government AP/SV/SP + the 2 centre parties V/KRF

# Summary: main message B

- Gender equality and work life balance represent substantial economic advantages, not only to the individual family but also to the national economy – very relevant during a financial crisis.
- Research is vital to make this link visible and known – as a basis for public debate and political decisions.
- LET'S GIVE THE ECONOMY A CHANCE!
- LET'S GIVE THE LABOUR MARKET A CHANCE!
- LET'S GIVE PRODUCTIVITY A CHANCE!
- LET'S INCLUDE WOMEN.....