

LIFU

Denmark

Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women.

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INTRODUCTION

Ligestilling i forskning og uddannelse (Equality in research and higher education) is a newly formed association of University Graduates and students in Denmark working to promote gender equality in research and higher education.

We are concerned about the range of apparent obstacles there are for creating equal opportunities for men and women in Danish research and by the underrepresentation of women among faculty staff in Danish universities, despite the fact that women have made up the majority of university students for quite some time. In particular we are concerned by the evidence that Denmark lacks behind other comparable countries with respect to gender equality in research, and it seems that very little progress has been made.

We find that the public awareness of these matters is very limited, even within academia, and there is a general reluctance to discuss gender issues and bias in research and education in Denmark.

With point of departure in the list of issues and questions to the 8th Periodic Report of Denmark and the Danish governments response hereto, we would like to draw the commission's attention to a number of follow up points that in our opinion need special attention.

We will limit ourselves to Article 10, although this area of course has implications for other articles and vice versa.

How does the Danish Government work to raise public awareness about CEDAW in Denmark?

It is our experience that the convention is not very visible in general and furthermore, information about CEDAW, it's mainstreaming and implementation is difficult to find.

What is Denmark's strategy for gender mainstreaming in the field of research and higher education?

Interestingly, research is not mentioned what so ever in the Governments strategy for Gender mainstreaming (the so called Ligestillingsvurdering), published February 2013. We find this particularly problematic since CEDAW raised serious concern in exactly this field in 2009.

Likewise, gender mainstreaming has not been included in the legislation leading to the establishment of the new Innovation Fund Denmark (formerly the Council for Strategic Research). At the same time, women's participation in strategic research and innovation programmes is low, not only is the number of female applicants lower than what could have been expected from the number of potential applicants; the success rates of women for applications are alarmingly low too. Therefore, it is a serious concern, that equal opportunities have not been addressed at all. Despite the wording in Denmark's reply to

the list of issues by CEDAW - that the Innovation Fund has policies to increase the participation of women in strategic research - the policy is not disseminated or made visible to potential applicants. No specific policy has been published, and gender issues, even in the form of expression of good intentions, are completely absent from the web page of the Innovation Fund.

Interestingly, mainstreaming issues and equal opportunities in higher education addressed by the Ministry for Equal Opportunities have mainly focused on men's share of teachers in the day care and elementary education, and consequently, the share of women in technical and science education have received less focus, despite the obvious gender bias.

What measures has Denmark applied – including temporary special measures – to increase the share of female professors and other high ranking positions in universities?

and

To what extent have Danish Universities developed and implemented gender equality policies, and what are the effects of the existing policies?

These are obvious follow up questions from the 7. report – to the best of our knowledge, no concrete actions specifically targeting this issue have been taken on a national level. Two universities (Aarhus and Copenhagen) have been granted exemption (in 2008 and 2010) in order to implement temporary special measures in the form of economic incentives to increase the share of female professors on full and associate professor levels respectively. The effect has not yet been documented. Not all Danish universities have defined specific and explicit gender equality policies. An example is the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) which at the same time has the strongest gender bias towards men among students as well as faculty. Women make up 30% of students and the share is increasing, however, from 2008 to 2012, the rate of women among full professors has decreased.

A catalogue of gender equality initiatives at the universities compiled by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science was scheduled for the fall of 2014. However, the report has not yet been published, and at the time of writing, LIFU is waiting for feedback from the ministry about the current status of the report.

What are the special initiatives targeting women in access to research funding and what is their impact?

A programme to increase women's access to research funding – Female Research Leaders was launched by the Danish Council for independent research (DFF) in 2008, but in 2010 the programme was discontinued. It has been replaced by the current Sapere Aude programme, which do not target women what so ever, nor does it contain any gender specific instruments – despite some of the arguments that was put forward when the programme was decided upon. In 2013 a one-off call specifically aiming at young female researchers was launched in the YDUN programme, also by DFF. However, the

amount allocated for the grants, does not even compensate for the observed difference in success rates between men and women – in other words, women’s share of the research grants is still smaller than men’s share, despite the special initiative. 17 female researchers obtained funding through the YDUN programme, which cannot be said to have large impact. The interest from women in the programme was extremely high, resulting in a success rate of less than 3%. As mentioned above, at the same time, the success rates of women for funds in the strategic research pillar are extremely low in comparison to the success rates of men.

It is noteworthy, that the Ministry of Education and Science each year publishes key figures for research funding by the different councils. However, the latest publication for Strategic Research (now Innovation Fund Denmark) which is concerned with the years from 2004-2013, does not contain any gender specific statistics. However, the underlying statistics reveals that for instance in 2013, 23% of the amount applied for to the Strategic Research council was applied for by women, whereas only 5% of the total amount granted was given to women. Average success rates for women were 3%, compared to 16% for men. Despite this imbalance, no measures have been taken to mitigate the discrepancy.

The Council for Independent Research has increasing focus on equal opportunities, for instance a workshop addressing women’s participation in research was held by the end of 2014. However, as an illustration of the political context where this takes place, we shall here refer to a commentary in a major Danish newspaper by the rapporteur on research and education from the leading opposition party, Venstre. The commentary concerned the abovementioned YDUN programme launched by The Danish Council for Independent Research (DFF): (our translation) *“The program is a pillar of shame for the current board of Research Council for Independent Research, who does not understand the writing on the wall in Denmark: That 110 million. Dkr should not be used for gender dimensioning of research at a time when we have far more important things to spend research funds on”* Berlingske, October 21st, 2014.