

**Work Session on Gender Statistics**  
**(Orvieto, Italy, 11-13 October 2000)**

**IDENTIFICATION OF NATIONAL GENDER ISSUES THROUGH INDICATORS -  
CASE: DECISION-MAKING IN FINLAND**

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**Introduction**

In Beijing plan of action statistics were regarded crucial to address gender issues in society, to achieve and monitor national policy goals and to mainstream. This is because statistics can show the different roles of women and men in society and unequal access to certain positions or resources and the progress of the situation through time.

Mainstreaming in statistics means to shift the focus from “women and men together“ –category into the production of all statistics presented separately by women and men and to reflect gender specific problems and issues in society. It also means the development of statistical tools for mainstreaming, like gender indicators.

The role of national statistical system can be seen as an instrument producing gender statistics on the basis of problems and goals identified in the national policies and plans. By ratifying the Platform for Action the Government of Finland has obliged Statistics Finland to compilation of gender statistics. Based on the Platform for Action Statistics Finland has started to develop indicators on gender equality from different policy areas. The process has been started by developing indicators on decision-making and on compiling statistics on working life and the process will continue to other policy areas.

The demand for gender statistics and indicators comes from policy makers at all levels, from Council for Equality, from trade unions, member organisations of Women’s Central League, researchers and from a broad audience.

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Indicators are developed for the use of decision-makers in order to reflect women's and men's conditions and contributions in society, their needs and their specific problems and gender equality. Each of the main policy areas includes a number of specific policies, measures and problems to be addressed and followed by statistics. The problems have to be investigated in order to identify underlying causes, to assess the effects, and to understand interrelations among different issues. By developing indicators the connection between the data and the prevailing societal situation and actions needed for progress can be more easily raised into awareness, displayed, explained and understood.

### **Case: Indicators on decision-making**

The Beijing Platform for Action draws attention to the fact that women are largely under-represented in most positions of power and at most levels of decision-making. The strategic objectives are to ensure women's equal access to and participation in power structures and decision-making and increase women's capacity to participate in leadership.

The idea of decision-making indicators is to monitor the progress of both equal opportunities and women's equal participation and to follow-up the commitment to the Equality Act stated first in 1987. In its Plan of Action, the Government as state employer has committed itself to advancing women's participation in decision-making through the equality plans of ministries and development programmes for office staff. Ministries, offices, public services and State-owned companies should demonstrate exemplary compliance with the obligations laid down by the Equality Act.

The Act was reformed in 1995 and the reform laid down the 40 % quota provision for women and for men. According to the quota provision, the minimum percentage of both women and men in all government committees, advisory boards, working groups and other corresponding bodies for preparation, planning and decision-making, as well as municipal bodies, shall be 40. The Act does not apply to municipal councils.

### **The Data in Decision-making Indicators**

Statistics Finland has lead discussions with users – with policy makers, researchers and other groups of users for example labour market organisations including organisations of employers and employees – and producers of statistics for collecting and analysing quantitative data on women and men in different stages and fields of decision-making.

It is evident that in spite of good registers there are areas where information is not systematically collected or reported. Now the data for indicators on women and men in decision-making has to be collected from several sources. Statistics Finland has collected data on women and men in leader positions in different employer statuses, and examined compositions of executive boards and elective political institutions on the below mentioned fields. Concerning indicators on decision-making it is important to take into account the quota provision in the Act on Equality.

## **Legislative elective and executive political institutions**

Indicators selected on political decision-making consist of the composition of Finnish Parliament, Government and regional elective bodies or local assemblies. It includes the data on women and men in parliamentary committees.

There are already time series and public knowledge on members of Parliament, distribution of Cabinet portfolios and regional elective bodies, but the information on committees is not as well known in public.

It seems that although women were given political clout early on in independent Finland's history, women remain largely under-represented in the political power structures. The share of women in Parliament has grown through time and it was at its highest level after the 1991 election when 38,5 per cent of elected MPs were women. In the latest elections the share was 37 per cent.

The number of women ministers was in 1991 41 percent and has been since then in compliance with the quota principle. The idea of indicators is not only to raise up the fact that women hold less Cabinet portfolios and MP seats but also to give an idea of the policy areas lead by women. The Cabinet portfolios held by women year 2000 are second minister of finance, minister of education, culture, trade and commerce, social and health, labour and environment.

## **Public administration**

Gender indicators in public administration include highest positions in ministries, main public or ministry dominated administrative offices, municipalities and main areas and composition of most important committees and work groups. The highest municipal positions are for example mayors. Also highest judiciary positions will be taken into account as indicators later on.

The careers of women and men in state administration have not been followed systematically before. In 1998 Statistics Finland made a specification of decision-making posts to the occupational classification of the public sector. This makes it easier to compare some of the highest positions in state, regional and municipal administration.

An increasing number of the highest-ranking officials are women. Since the quota provision for women and for men came into force, women's participation in decision-making at state and municipal level has increased. In the beginning of 1995, women constituted about one third of the members of the committees. In the first year of the Equality Act, the quota provision lifted the share of women on committees to 42 %, but working parties to only 34 %. After the reform of the Equality Act, 68 % of the committees and 42% of the working parties complied with the gender distribution provision. The aim of the indicator-project is to follow the progress through time.

The indicators will give little information on the recruitment basis, by displaying the share of women and men holding the positions regarded as second or third highest levels. This is to reveal that even in female-dominated branches such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the

Ministry of Education, women aspiring to the post of director-general find themselves looking through a glass ceiling.

### **Finnish representation in European Parliament and some EU-institutions**

These indicators include Finnish members elected to the European Parliament and Finnish members of the Economic and Social Committee and Committee of the Regions, who are mainly the members nominated by national governments according to the criteria set up by the Treaty. Gender composition in nominated posts depends almost exclusively on the political will of governments and are more easily influenced than elected posts.

### **Universities**

The data consists of the share of women and men in leading positions, and the share in executive boards of the universities and of the most important research funds. Women are a great minority among the university principals and professors, with a share of 20 percent or less respectively.

### **Political parties**

Indicators are the share of women and men as presidents, party secretaries and members of a policy making board of the main political parties. The share of women members in the policy making boards is 37 percent compared to the share of 13 percent as party secretaries. The information is collected from the parties.

### **Labour Market Organisations**

Women are underrepresented in decision-making of all labour market organisations compared to women's share of their members. Indicators concerning Labour Market Organisations consist of their presidents and members. General equality has progressed in some decision-making organs of the employee organisations, Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland (Akava) and the Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees (STTK). In contrast, the bodies of the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) has dwindled in recent years. Women are more visible in the local supervision of employees' interests than at central organisation level. The share of women in executive boards of the employee organisations as a group of organisations is somewhat better than that of the employer organisations, 25 percent and eight percent respectively. For the moment there is generally less information available on the employer organisations.

### **Most important NGO s**

The information on NGO s is limited to the share of women and men as secretary generals in organisations with a full-time leader or manager. In 1995 women's share was 32 %.

### **Private sector and Media**

According to a survey made by a financial journal (Talouselämä) in 2000 11 % of the directors of big companies were women. The percentage of women directors in state-majority companies is

higher. It seems then that women have a slightly worse chance of acceding of leading positions in the private than in the public sector. By industry, the gender segregation in management reflects the labour market's division into female- and male-dominated fields. Woman likeliness of becoming manager depends directly on the extent to which the field in question is female- or male-dominated. New high-status professions such as information technology, are typically male-dominated.

In media women's access to highest positions is easiest in the field of newspapers and publishing. 41 % of the chief editors and 50 % of the managing editors were women in 2000. In book publishing the leading positions were mainly occupied by women, 80 % of the managers were women.

### **Summary**

In principle women's share seems to be higher in elective and executive political bodies, in state-owned institutions and ministries than in the private sector and in other kinds of organisations. Still some of the highest positions also in the female-dominated fields are lead by men. Although the future looks promising, women's participation in decision-making can be expected to climb only with effort, also at the highest level public administration.

Thus it is important to monitor and evaluate progress in the representation of women through the regular collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative data on women and men at all levels in various decision-making positions in the public and private sector. Statistics Finland will collect the data presented above as regarded adequate.

Statistics can reveal the effects of positive actions to encourage women's presence in different kinds of leading positions. The indicators can show the impact of policies and measures to promote equal participation between women and men in legislative or elected and political executive bodies at the national, regional and local level. Indicators can reveal the meaning of possibilities to reconcile working life with family life and renew the grounds for recruiting and appointing staff in different organisations.

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