



Inequality in Scandinavian academia – challenges and strategies

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RESEARCH CONTEXT

- Why is vertical sex segregation resilient in Scandinavian Academia, countries that are recognised as the most equal?
- Do academics see the need for strategies in terms of affirmative action (AA)?

Research Context

- Academic work in Denmark, Norway and Sweden

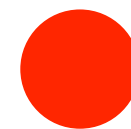
The Scandinavian paradox;

- Internationally ranked amongst the most equal countries in the world
- Occupational sex segregation exists, both horizontally and vertically
- Social democratic welfare approach
- Affirmative action strategies

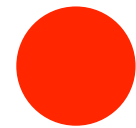
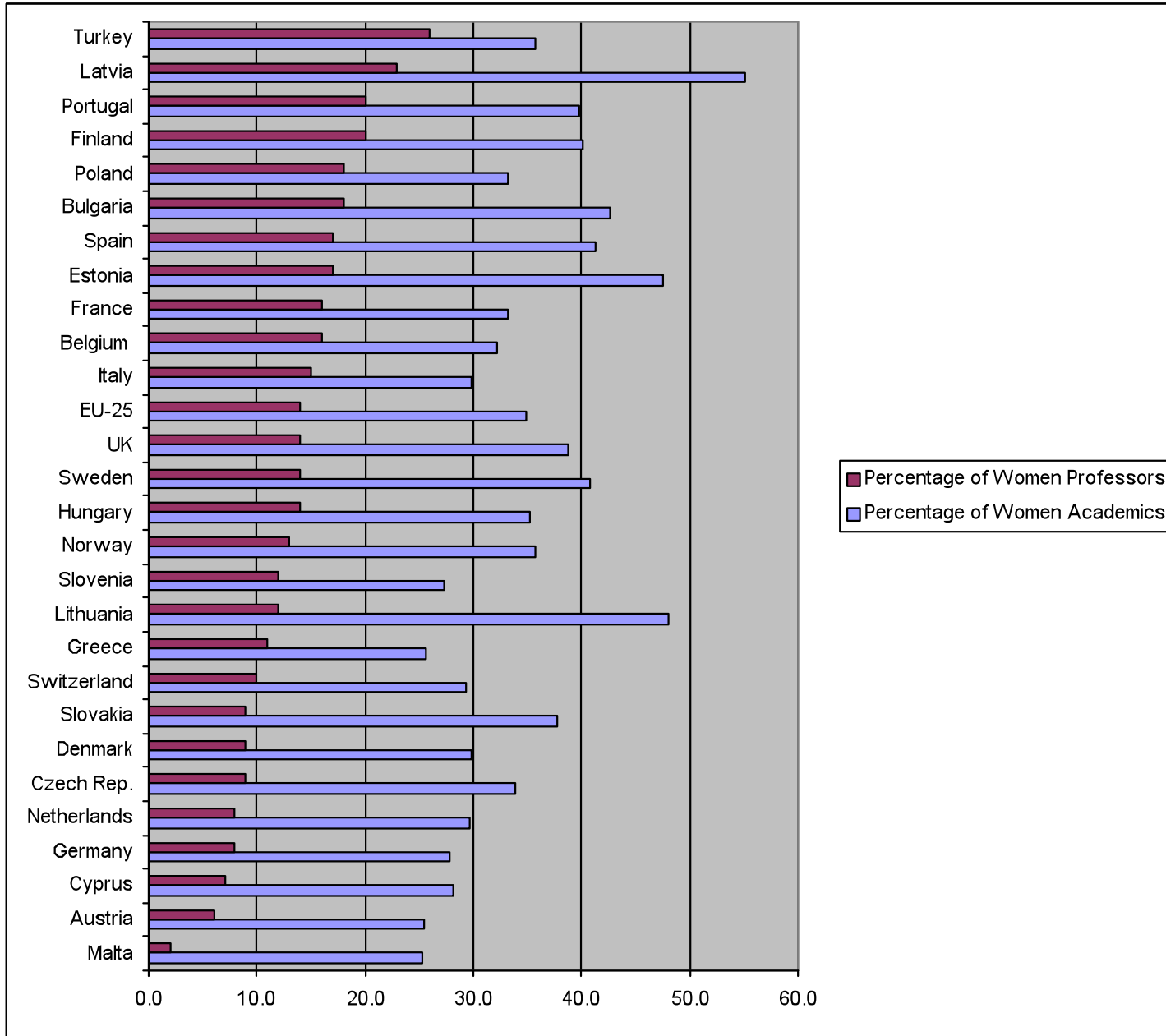


EQUALITY RANKING: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2008 (2005)

Country	Female Activity rate	Economic	GEM Rank	GDI Rank	HDI Rank
Norway	87		1 (1)	3 (1)	2
Sweden	87		2 (2)	5 (4)	6
Finland	86		3	8	11
Denmark	84		4 (3)	11 (13)	14
Iceland	86		5	1	1
Netherlands	77		6	6	9
Belgium	73		7	14	17
Australia	80		8	2	3
Germany	77		9	20	22
Canada	84		10	4	4
New Zealand	82		11	18	19
Spain	66		12	12	13
Austria	76		13	19	15
United Kingdom	80		14	10	16
United States	82		15	16	12
France	79		18	7	10
Ireland	74		19	15	5
Turkey	36		90	78	84



The Percentage of women academics and professors in European countries



RESEARCH METHODS

- Survey (closed and open ended questions)
- Women academics in universities of Norway, Sweden and Denmark
- 240 women, 215 usable responses
- 40 per cent response rate
- Limitations



EQUALITY AT THE WORKPLACE

- 80 % questioned equality within academia
- Gendered stereotyping and expectations of being ‘the other’

I think it is predominantly a question of traditional gender cultural (and social) patterns, where outspokenness in women is still unconsciously regarded as aggressive, while in men it is perceived as an asset, with the consequence that university politics at all levels are still almost exclusively dominated by men! (Associate professor, Denmark)

*I have many examples of the common mechanisms of men choosing men, male networks more or less open or secret, men being seen as constituting the natural heirs to their professors and being granted a self-evident place in the structure while women have to force their way into the structure, **the competence of men being over evaluated while the competence of women is under evaluated etc. etc.**” (Professor Sweden)*

- Different focuses and disciplines
- Students time
- Administrative duties



PROCEDURES FOR HIRING

- 40 per cent believe procedure for hiring favour men, 60 per cent believe its neutral
 - Networks, Homosocial reproduction

Positions are often “made” with someone in mind. This ‘someone’ is often a man they know. (Norwegian professor)

- Expectations to women’s reproductive capacity

I think younger men are still favoured over younger women, because they usually don’t have long maternity leaves. Men also stand a better chance to get a career because of this and they are also still better paid.’(Danish professor)



DISCRIMINATION

- 26 per cent have experienced discrimination

If it is clear from the beginning that the research is done by a man, it is regarded as better quality research than if the research is done by a woman. I have personal experience where women really have to defend and justify their work and ideas to a greater extent than men have to. Recognition is subjective and difficult to measure, but I do really think that it comes easier for men.(Assistant professor Norway)

I think that some people I know (mostly men) are able to present the same work as somehow more original or “larger” than I am.(PhD student Denmark)



IS RADICAL AA NECESSARY IN ACADEMIA?

- AA identified as a potential way to change the gendered practices in academia
 - 65 per cent in favour of gender quotas in some settings
 - 57 per cent in favor of ‘earmarking’ in some settings
 - Enabling strategies
- Liberal strategies not working

We do have the “law” saying that if equally qualified, choose the minority sex applicant. Nevertheless, everybody can avoid that law and that is what’s being done here; it is ‘business as usual’ (Associate professor Norway)



RATIONALE FOR SUPPORTING AA

- Old boys club
- Create level playing field
- Skeptical supporters
- Supported using both justice and business case rational

Unfortunately it is necessary . But it is also problematic as they tend to raise doubt about women's professional qualifications – “Oh her – she only got the position because of the quota”. (Danish assistant professor)



MERIT AND AA

- Identified how merit is not working and women identify barriers in the labour market
- While there is a rejection of a meritocratic society, it is a belief that AA can create a system where merit becomes more of gender neutral criteria
- Entitlement to positions based on merit

What counts is to have the right POSITIONS not your sex – but to get the positions is much more difficult due to the sex for women than for men because the selection is NOT through educations and other qualifications BUT through the network –and since the men rules the dominant position they give their job to their male colleges (Danish associate professor)



COUNTRY SPECIFIC DIFFERENCES

- Norway long history of AA, recently quotas on boards
- Sweden, long history of AA, debate about quotas on boards
- Denmark, less use of AA, little debate of AA on boards

I am not sure if I support strategies such as quotas, but we need a debate about it! The current situation is not satisfactory and we need to consider new approaches. If, after investigation, it is decided quotas is not the right approach, then fine. But in Denmark, we have been and are too afraid to consider quotas, it is time to have the debate. (Danish associate professor)



CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

- Questioning equality in Scandinavian academia
- Expectations and gendered stereotypes are strong
- Academics/professors are in the image of a man

- See the need for political strategies both for substantive benefits and equality of access
- See the need for a discussion of AA
- Questions the effects of liberal strategies
- Question meritocracy within academia
- Supports the idea of radical AA, such as quotas
- Rationalise support of AA based on merit



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