

# **National report.**

## **Policies shaping employment, skills and gender equality in the Danish labour market.**

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Introduction.....	3
Background information on the NAP's.....	3
Main employment problems and approaches in the NAP's .....	6
The gender approach in the NAP's .....	11
The KBS strategy in the NAP's .....	19
Conclusion .....	22
Literature .....	25

## **Introduction**

This national report is submitted under the European WELLKNOW-project dealing with the Knowledge Based Society (KBS) and gender mainstreaming strategies under the European Employment Strategy (EES). The main purpose is to analyse the National Employment Strategies (NAP) from 1998-2003 regarding the inclusion of aims for gender mainstreaming and policies for the knowledge based society. Further the aim is to analyse the political role of the NAP's and the process of making the NAP.

This report is based on the Danish NAPs for 1998-2003. Moreover the EGGE reports on the NAPs have been used. Five expert interviews have been carried out: One former civil servant from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality (now working for the social partners), one civil servant dealing with gender equality in the Ministry of Employment, one civil servant in charge of the NAP in all years (interviewed in telephone), the Danish member of the EGGE-group and the Vice-director of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation.

## **Background information on the NAP's**

Denmark submitted its first NAP in 1998 after it was decided at the European Council meeting in Luxembourg 1997 that the Member States should draw up annual national action plans for employment. When Denmark submitted the first NAP in 1998, Denmark had already for five years pursued a stabile economic growth and a growing employment based on the strategy for an active labour market. This means that it is difficult to assess the direct impact of the EES in a Danish context. The main reason for the reduction in the gender employment gap was more a consequence of economic growth and strategies already launched than the implementation of the EES. A reason why the EES was not given huge priority is also that Denmark already met with the Lisbon

employment target for 2010 of a 70% employment rate and a special employment rate of 60% for women.

*“The European Employment Strategy has had a bigger political influence in the South European countries compared to the Nordic countries. It has had an impact on the attitudes dominating in Denmark towards the EES that Denmark already did meet the Lisbon targets and that there is a narrow gender gap with regard to employment”*  
(Civil servant, the Ministry of Employment)

The role of the NAP is to be the basis for an effective reporting on implementation of the employment guidelines. The NAP contains information about how the policy of the government responds to the guidelines, the impact of the measures that the government has already taken, the follow up to the recommendations and information about new policies and initiatives. The Danish NAP's from 1998-2003 are “build on each other” and there are a number of retrospective references in the NAP's about the policy, which was described and presented in the previous NAP's.

*“ A characteristic thing with the creation of the NAP is that they to a high extent are following the path of the previous NAP”* (Civil servant, the Ministry of Employment)

The leading and co-ordinating partner of the NAP in Denmark is the Ministry of Employment. But also the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economic and Commerce, the Ministry of Social affairs and Gender Equality, and the Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration play a vital role. The process of preparation for the NAP is characterised by that the Ministry of Employment is organising a number of meetings with the relevant actors and is receiving their contributions to the NAP. The government and the social partners, at the level of civil servants, are then having meetings where the preparation and the drawing of the NAP are being discussed.

The agenda for the NAP reflects the Danish labour market model with a high involvement of the social partners. There is a long tradition in Denmark for tripartite co-operation between the Government and the central representatives of the social partners. The social partners play a central role in the determination of pay and working conditions by means of collective agreements and other agreements. The social partners are also involved in connection with legislation and the

administration of legislation both at the central and regional level. The social partners are therefore actively involved on a current basis in the implementation of the employment strategy, i.e. the employment guidelines. The involvement of the social partners takes place through two main channels; through collective bargaining and through various types of partnership agreements, either mutual agreements between two sides or agreements between the social partners and the Government.

Therefore all the big social partners in the private and public labour market like the Confederation of Danish Trade Unions (LO), Danish Employers Confederation (DA), the National Association of Municipal Authorities (KL) etc are participating to the NAP in Denmark. In the introduction to the NAP 2002 it is emphasised that, “the contributions submitted by the social partners have – to the widest possible extent- been incorporated into the plan.” In the NAP 1999 the findings, observations and analyses from the social partners did contribute directly to pillars concerning Improving employability, Encouraging adaptability of businesses and their employees and Strengthening equal opportunities for women and men. In the NAP 2003 the contribution of the social partners has both been incorporated into the guidelines and in the Annex of the NAP.

Regarding the involvement of NGO’s it can be said that no NGO’s have been involved in the work with the Danish NAP’s until 2002. In the NAP 2003, however, the Danish Council of Organisations of Disabled Persons did participate in the drawing of the NAP.

*“The NGO’s are often heard before the concrete work with the NAP begin. But in general they are not directly involved in the drawing of the NAP”* (Civil servant, the Ministry of Employment)

In the NAP 2002 the contribution of the social partners was very much directed towards an agreement between the social partners regarding integration of refugees and immigrants in the Danish labour market. In the NAP 2003 it is mentioned by the social partners in the private labour market that it is a “*significant challenge for Denmark to maintain and increase the participation rates, and especially to raise the participation rates for refugees and immigrants*”. In 2003, the social partners have also made a proposal to the Government to improve the guidelines of the NAP

on safety and health. Concerning the gender equality bodies, which have been consulted in the process making of the NAP, primarily the governmental bodies contributed to the NAP.

## **Main employment problems and approaches in the NAP's**

The overall employment strategy for the Danish government since the introduction of the NAP in 1998 was to find ways to obtain the necessary growth in the labour force to finance the welfare state and maintain a high welfare level; especially the old age pension of the coming senior citizens. Therefore all the NAP's are making reference to future goals in 2005 and 2010 when the goal shall be obtained. The growth in employment, shall preferably take place in the private sector and the growth in the public sector shall be moderated. Focus is more on raising employment than reducing unemployment. This is due to the fact that the unemployment rate is so low that increased employment will require a higher number of labour market entrants. In the NAP 1999 it is stated that the unemployment has continued to fall with a surprising speed so that the unemployment rate was the lowest since the beginning of the 1970s.

In 2001 when the government presented its targets for the development in the national economy up to the year 2010 the most important elements were the following:

- To ensure an increase in employment
- To obtain an increase in real wages
- To improve the quality in core sectors of the welfare society
- To ensure a higher level of education which will increase labour market flexibility
- To create room for higher private consumption and increased savings
- To keep taxes stable and to ensure a room for lower taxes in selected fields
- To halve public debts
- To reduce foreign debts

The target for employment in the NAP 1998 was that employment should increase by 200,000 persons from 1998 to 2005. Unemployment should gradually be reduced to 5 per cent in 2005. The

improved employability should be realised through activation, upgrading of qualifications, and skills development for both young and adult unemployed persons together with stricter rules on availability.

Lifelong learning is given a high priority both at the private and public labour market in all the NAP's from 1998-2003. The "*Danish strategy for lifelong learning*" is based on the need for continued education/training among adults. The upgrading of skills and training of the labour force are essential instruments, not only for the creation of more jobs but also for better jobs. It is often stated that the objective is not employment growth at any price. The crucial point to reach the knowledge based society is to make the society better equipped for future challenges by giving priority to good working conditions for the enterprises in connection with long term investments in education and training.

The focus in the NAP's is very much on those groups, which have not yet benefited from economic prosperity. It is emphasized that the skills of unemployed people must be upgraded so that they could be able to obtain an ordinary job. The NAP 1998 contains a plan of action for long term unemployed people. The development of the qualifications of the labour force is both seen as an industrial policy instrument and a labour market policy instrument.

In the NAP 1999 lifelong learning is being characterised as the central and overall objective of the Government's educational policy. It is stated that the government has set up a committee of civil servants dealing with continued and advanced education/training. A report with representatives from trade, universities and ministries has pointed out that the growing bottleneck problem in the IT sector is to be found on the education side. Effort is therefore done in NAP 1999 to discuss the importance of upgrading people with IT skills. In the NAP 2000 it is mentioned that the action plan mentioned in the NAP 1999 is nearly fully implemented and IT has become a compulsory element of all vocational training programmes. An example of a synergy between the KBS and the gender mainstreaming strategy is to be found in the NAP 1999 where it is mentioned that the two existing IT schools are having education programmes at different levels and an effort is being made to increase the entrance of female students.

In the NAP 2001 it is written that the information society and the increasing use of technology make heavy demands on the individual persons' capability to acquire new knowledge as an ongoing process during the whole working life. Therefore the most important task of the primary school is to make it possible for the students to acquire basic knowledge and skills and to motivate the students to continue his/her education all life.

An ongoing issue in the different NAP's are the awareness-initiatives, which has been taken concerning the issue of the *inclusive labour market*. The objective of many of the initiatives is to make it possible that as many people as possible can be retained on or obtain a new place on the labour market. People who become sick or undergo crises should not be excluded from the labour market. It is over and over again stated that there shall be room for persons who are not able to obtain or maintain employment in ordinary terms. In the NAP 2001 a focus is on the strengthening of measures against discrimination of exposed groups for instance ethnic minorities. The government wanted to improve the participation rate of immigrants from the 57 per cent in 2001 to 65 percent in 2010.

The reform of the system for adult and continued training from 2001 had the following objectives:

- To offer relevant continued and further training activities to all adults, from the level of unskilled workers to persons with university degrees
- To pay special attention to the needs of low-skilled adults
- To make better use of the resources available

In the NAP 2000 it is also mentioned that an ICT action plan has been drawn up for the period of 1998-2003 in order to promote the use of information and communication technology at all levels of the educational system.

In the NAP 1998 the Government stresses that the goal is on a broad front to create good possibilities for the establishment and development of new enterprises. It is essential for a good business climate that the framework conditions are functioning. The Government claims that the economic policy aimed at stabilisation through low inflation and low interest rates is a good starting point for the establishment of new enterprises.



It is often mentioned in the NAP's that a target is to introduce administrative simplification and to reduce the administrative burdens of trade and industry by simplification of existing legislation and by avoiding unnecessary burdens in new legislations. The government wants to create better framework conditions for entrepreneurs and small enterprises. In the NAP 2001 the main conclusions from the analysis "*Female entrepreneurs now and in the future*" were that there are differences in men and women's choice of economic sector when they start up their own business. Women often choose the service sector within traditional female occupations. It was also mentioned that there were differences in the priorities of men and women when they set up their own business. Male entrepreneurs do not give the same priority to the well being of their families as the female entrepreneurs do. Female entrepreneurs were also not as concerned as the male entrepreneurs whether their enterprise will become bigger or not.

The employment guidelines under this pillar are dealing with the modernisation of the organisation of work and measures to support the adaptability of enterprises. The policy of the Danish Government is strongly affected by the labour market model dominating in Denmark. Questions related to the organisation of work and questions related to the development of new form of employment contracts are regulated by collective agreements between the social partners. It is the policy of the Government to increase the supply of labour in order to ensure the continued economic growth. This includes for instance measures to postpone the retirement from the labour market and measures to promote flexible forms of employment contracts.

In the NAP 1999 there is a detailed description of the contributions of the social partners in the private and the public labour market concerning how to achieve the necessary balance between a higher degree of flexibility and security in the work organisation.

In November 2001 a new government of the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party took over from the Social-Democratic Party and the Radical Liberal Party. The overall employment strategy is still the same focusing on bringing more people into employment, a need for continued upgrading and development of the skills, low and stable inflation and creating good conditions for private savings. But it is also possible to see the new discourses and policies in the NAP's from 2002 and 2003.

The government's main principle is based on the "give-and-take" principle. In the new Government's national economy objectives there is also a strong focus on outsourcing of the public sector and tax freeze. In the NAP 2002 the Government emphasizes that in order to ensure the necessary growth of the labour force there is a need for finding structural improvements of the Danish labour market. The overall objective of the Government's reform work is to place the individual above the system. The following initiatives are presented.

- Streamlining of active labour market measures
- Better integration of immigrants and refugees on the labour market
- Better balance between family and working life
- Streamlining of the educational system
- Improved framework conditions for growth

The Government has set up the reform "*More people into employment*" which is focusing on an individual approach to secure an intensive contact between the individual unemployed and the public authorities responsible for the activation of the unemployed. The wish from the Government is to create a quick and efficient way to an ordinary job for the long term unemployed persons.

The government has further created a "*competitiveness package*" in January 2002 as an element of the general growth strategy, which is to improve the conditions for running a business in Denmark. The package includes different initiatives, which is targeting an effort of making it more attractive for private enterprises to invest in development and research activities. Regarding lifelong learning the government is continuing the strategy of the previous Government focusing on continuing education and training as a natural element of many people's daily life. It is stressed that the educational system must be able to meet the needs of the enterprises for competent managers and flexible employees with the relevant qualifications and competences. The reform of the adult vocational training system from 2001 is still of huge importance in the strategy of lifelong learning. In 2002 the Government presented an action plan "*Better education programmes*" as a new initiative with the purpose of strengthening the educational standards in the youth education, higher education and adult further and continued training. The action did also include inter-disciplinary fields such as IT, entrepreneurship and self-employment culture.

It is the intention of the Government that Denmark in 2010 should be in top class in Europe in the field of entrepreneurship. Therefore the Government is trying to improve the entrepreneurship culture and abolishing inappropriate rules for the enterprises. Different funds have been established to improve the access to capital for example the “Growth Fund” (Vækstfonden) and “The Entrepreneurship Fund” (Iværksætterfonden).

## **The gender approach in the NAP's**

The general objective of the employment guidelines under the gender equality pillar is to strengthen equal opportunities for women and men, including a gender mainstreaming approach in all policies, to offer better possibilities for reconciling work and family life and to facilitate reintegration into the labour market.

In general the Danish NAP from 1998 to 2003 must be said to be rather gender blind concerning the gender mainstreaming approach in the implementation of the employment guidelines. There is not many gender mainstreaming attempts if we do not consider what has been written in the pillar 4 (Strengthening equal opportunities policies for women and men) and if we look apart from the fact that the statistics on employment rates and activity rates in the NAP's are made gender specific. There is a difference in the way the gender approach is attacked in the different NAP's. In 1998 there were references from the Equal Treatment Act put into the NAP saying, *“All employers have to treat men and women equally in connection with for example employment, promotion, and dismissal and in respect of working conditions”*. (NAP: 1998: 61) Further it is mentioned that there must be no wage discrimination in contravention of the law. The fact that such a text is included into the NAP 1998 indicates some understanding on how gender questions are dealt with in reality. It is possible to see that the gender-mainstreaming concept was first introduced in the guidelines for the 1999 NAP.

In the NAP 1998 the focus was on gender alone. The main gender-gaps targeted in the NAP 1998 were women's unemployment rate. It is mentioned that *“female employment is becoming increasingly widespread, however, there is still a need for continued initiatives for further development for instance on distribution on economic sectors”*. It was also emphasised that it should be easier to return to and remain on the labour market. Reconciling work and family life has

been on the agenda in all the NAP's. In 1998 there was a reference to a campaign launched in 1996 for creating better family-friendly workplaces and it is an ongoing theme in all the NAP's.

Regarding the equal opportunity work in the Public Employment Services (PES) it is stated that the equal opportunity work has been focussed on the following fields:

- The public employment service contributes in co-operation with public and private enterprises to a more flexible labour market by dismantling barriers to appointment according to sex
- The public employment service will endeavour to reduce the higher rate of long-term unemployment among women
- The public employment service will promote the opportunities for students and unemployed persons for establishing links to the labour market by providing offers geared to men's as well as women's needs
- The public employment service will monitor the regional labour market for the purpose of collecting and communicating data on men's and women's employment and the consequences in terms of equal opportunities of labour market policy measures

From 1999 on the gender mainstreaming approach is implemented. It is mentioned that an effort is made to promote equality between man and women on the labour market through the general mainstreaming strategy, which means that equality aspects are taken into account in all ordinary policy fields. In 1999 the social partners on the private labour market LO and DA submitted a joint contribution to the NAP in which they emphasised that mainstreaming would be a key word in the work in the future. In the NAP 1999 it is mentioned that improvement of female career opportunities and elimination of discriminatory differentials in incomes between men and women are added to the gender equality field:

In the NAP 2000 there is still confusion about *formal* and *genuine* gender equality. It is written in the NAP 2000 under the gender equality pillar that: "*the principle of equal opportunities for women and men (the mainstreaming approach) has been integrated in the Danish legislation in the fields of labour market policy and taxation as this legislation is based on the individual person*". (NAP: 2000: 20) This phrase indicates that there is not a sophisticated comprehension of the content and

the method of the gender mainstreaming approach. But in general the year 2000 is an important year for the gender equality policy in Denmark. The new Equal opportunity Act from 2000 with the establishment of an Equal status Department, the establishment of the National Danish Knowledge Centre for Gender Equality and a new debate forum means new possibilities for a dynamic gender environment in Denmark. The purpose of the National Danish Knowledge Centre for Gender Equality was to ensure that the debate concerning equal opportunities is taking place on a well-documented basis.

In 2001 it was mentioned that the new Equal Opportunities Act was adopted according *“to which all public authorities will in the future have to introduce the mainstreaming principle in planning and administration. This will increase the focus on gender and equality perspectives in the Danish employment policy”* (NAP: 2001: 4). In the NAP from 2001 it is possible to see that the civil servants who were dealing with the gender questions did so very competently in seeing the difference between the formal and genuine gender equality. It is interesting to see that the civil servants who have written the chapter on gender equality actually are stating that measures in the NAP are the *“Government’s overall objective of creating a society with both formal and genuine equal opportunities for men and women”* (NAP: 2001: 26)

The main concerns in the NAP 2001 on gender gaps was on the wage gap and the gender segregation though it was emphasized that Denmark together with the other Nordic countries were having the lowest average wage difference in the world. Less focus was put on gender differences in unemployment rates and on the interaction between gender and ethnicity, age and education. It also stated that Denmark by international standards has some of the highest participation and employment rates for women. Women’s over-unemployment compared to men has been falling. But still the Danish labour market is characterised by gender segregation.

A modernisation of the PES was taking place and as an element to combat bottlenecks a mainstreaming project was launched in 3 PES regions. It was maintained that the preliminary results showed that the new methods and instruments have been successful in eliminating sex segregation in the placement activities of the PES. The precise content of the mainstreaming project in the PES regions was due to over-unemployment of women and recruitment problems in crafts to train women in traditionally male-dominated occupations such as electricians, joiners and

carpenters. On the other side there were also regions, which were training men to go into female occupations. The PES mainstreaming project was really the “flagship” of the mainstreaming policy.

*“The PES mainstreaming project has been used again and again when discussing the positive experiences of the gender mainstreaming policy. The PES mainstreaming project was also good, but it is also important to indicate the limitations of the project”* (Former civil servant, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality, now working for the social partners)

The civil servant argued that it is a problem that we have not reached a stadium in which gender mainstreaming has become obvious for the politicians and the civil servants in the different ministries. It was again and again stated that gender mainstreaming is not something “*you just come from the street and start to practice*”. Gender mainstreaming must be performed based upon a broad knowledge about perspectives and obstacles dealing with gender questions. It was emphasized that many attitudes towards gender mainstreaming were based upon myth and prejudices.

It was also emphasized that if the gender mainstreaming approach shall be able to change established relationships between the sexes the gender mainstreaming goals must be very clear also for persons not working with gender mainstreaming in their everyday life. It is clear that working with gender and gender mainstreaming has some specific challenges and obstacles.

*“The gender mainstreaming strategy is mostly put into practice by gender sensitive civil servants. Therefore if you want to convince people that it is useful to work with the gender dimension you must present some extremely evident cases where the gender dimension is really presenting some new angles creating long lasting changes for the good of the whole society”.* (Former civil servant, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality, now working for the social partners)

It is not easy to incorporate gender equality perspectives in all policies. It demands a minimum of willingness from the involved actors. But it is also a problem that the term gender mainstreaming has caused a lot of confusion in the ministries on how it should be understood and how the gender

mainstreaming approach should be implemented in practice. The interviewed experts who had a long experience in working with gender mainstreaming stated that there are huge cultural difficulties in raising the question on gender mainstreaming. It is especially difficult for male civil servants to see the gendered dimension to different problems. This means that it is not easy to convince them that using analytic gender tools will improve the possibility of resolving the different problems that they are dealing with.

There is no doubt about the importance of knowing what the majority of civil servants actually thinks and feel about the gender mainstreaming. It is not easy to convince people that gender mainstreaming is a long-term process, which can establish useful organisational changes. In an interview with a male civil servant in the Ministry of Employment it was easy to understand that gender mainstreaming was not regarded a serious policy field:

*“Regarding the gender mainstreaming strategy I can say that we do not have a planned-economy in Denmark. We believe in the free individual and the reason why there are a majority of women in the public sector is due to the fact that the psychology of women is well suited to the public sector”* (Civil servant, the Ministry of Employment)

There is no doubt that if the gender mainstreaming strategy shall be pushed further in Denmark it demands an effort to understand how men are thinking and acting in relation to gender equality issues. There is still a widespread and legitimised resistance among men to change their attitudes in a more progressive direction when dealing with gender questions. Therefore if the gender mainstreaming strategy shall be implemented successfully it is necessary to include the question on men's role in the work for gender equality. In 2002 the ministries were encouraged to implement the gender dimension more in the NAP. But it was only the Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality who respected the gender mainstreaming guidelines the other ministries did ignore that they were asked to do it.

*“When we made the proposal to the four pillars on how they could be gender mainstreamed it was clear that it could be a problem if we pointed out some questions and solutions which the government did not want to solve or deal with. It was both a*

*question about that they did not want to touch the gender dimension but it was also clear that they were not equipped with the right gender mainstreaming skills and methods. It is a problem for a lot of people that they do not know the real purpose of gender mainstreaming. The majority think that we have achieved gender equality or at least we are very close to the goal and what might be lacking will show up in the future in a natural way” (Former civil servant, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality, now working for the social partners).*

The interviewed experts emphasized the difficulties in understanding the approach of gender mainstreaming. They all stated that it is important that the actors working with the NAP’s know how to “think” gender and that a comprehensive gender mainstreaming approach is needed where there is developed assessment and monitoring systems combined the right will to establish training and awareness raising.

*“The Danish NAP 2001 was a good one because it was clear that the involved actors knew how to make a difference between formal and real gender equal opportunity. It is possible to see whether there have been “real” gender experts involved with the gender mainstreaming work. ” (The Danish EGGE expert)*

One of the reason why gender mainstreaming has not become a real concern in the economic and employment policy is due to very different agendas in the different ministries involved in the formulation of the employment policy. A result of these differences is that gender impact assessments are not really included in the long-term employment policy.

After the change in government in November 2001 the Danish government has been less committed to the principle of gender equality between the sexes. In the NAP 2002 under the fourth pillar (Strengthening equal opportunities policies for women and men) the Government is emphasising that Denmark has an equality-friendly labour market where women’s participation rates are high. The measures are concentrated on the issues of equal pay, the gender segregated labour market and reconciling work and family life. There is a presentation of the inter-ministerial gender mainstreaming projects, which has been introduced in the ministries. It is written that a steering



group has been set with participation of high level civil servants from all ministries and that this steering group has drawn up a 5-year action plan for the implementation of this strategy.

Networks for employees were established to work with mainstreaming in their daily work. It is further emphasised that a number of meetings have been held in which persons involved in the mainstreaming projects have had the possibility to exchange experiences about methods and communication questions related to the work with the gender mainstreaming strategy. It is stressed that two booklets about gender mainstreaming published by the Danish National Research Centre on Gender Equality gave a lift in the equality work in the ministries. As a result of this lift in the equality work it is emphasised that equality work is now a core activity in the ministries and is increasing the quality of the services offered to the citizens. Such an assessment can be doubted when focus is on the reality of the gender equality work in the ministries. But it is clear that there is a much more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and obstacles of the gender mainstreaming strategy compared to what was written in the NAP1998.

In the NAP 2002 it is mentioned under pillar 2 “developing entrepreneurship and job creation” that the government is of the opinion that initiatives and measures should support private initiatives among both men and women and that special measures for female entrepreneurs will only be needed in exceptional cases.

It is stated that the number of women in managerial and executive post is still low considering the fact that women now have an employment rate that is almost as high as that of men. It is mentioned that the minister for gender equality and the minister for employment will take a joint initiative to examine the possibilities of introducing flexible working time arrangements based on a persons entire working life.

In the NAP 2003 the Liberal/Conservative Government stress that the equality policy in the labour employment field is based on women’s already high participation rates in Denmark. Also in 2003 the gender gap policy is orientated towards the breakdown of gender-segregated labour market, to reduce the gender pay gap between men and women and creating a better harmony in working and family life. The Government stresses how the availability of childcare provision are contributing to promote labour market participation for both men and women and to improve the reconciliation of

work and family life. The childcare guarantee, which exists in 90% of Danish municipalities, is being underlined and it is emphasised that Denmark already meets the target for childcare provision, which the member states are recommended to meet by 2010. The gender-mainstreaming project in the PES is again presented in the NAP and it is stated that in 2003 three new regions will start gender mainstreaming projects and hopefully it will spread to all PES regions. Further it is mentioned that LO and DA has entered into a co-operation about equal pay analyses to establish a common analytical reference framework for the equal pay discussions in Denmark. It has for several years been a problem that DA and Lo did not recognise each other's way to measure the gender pay gap.

In the interview with the experts focus was also on the consequences for the gender equality policy after the restructuring of the employment guidelines when the equal opportunities is no longer within the three overarching objectives. There were different attitudes towards the change of the pillar structure. The Danish EGGE expert stated that

*“There is a huge difference in having one separate pillar out of four pillar compared to be one out of ten guidelines. There will not be the same focus on gender with the new guidelines”.*

But there was also the attitude indicating that:

*“It is not so important where the gender mainstreaming approach is mentioned in the NAP. The crucial point is whether there is the will and knowledge to implement the approach in the policies.”* (Civil servant, the Ministry of Employment)

An example of a policy which will have a negative gender impact is to find in the NAP from 2003 in which the new and longer maternity leave scheme is mentioned in connection to the Governments overall objective to give families better options and a higher degree of flexibility in relation to their labour market participation. It is emphasised that the flexibility of the maternity leave scheme makes it possible to maintain the contact with the workplace also during the periods on maternity leave. It is stated that, *“this initiative is very important for promoting gender equality”*. It is interesting to observe that nothing is said about the negative impact that the prolonged

maternity leave scheme has on the reduced number of men using the leave possibilities, because of gender-neutral schemes with no earmarked period for men. Further the impact of the prolonged maternity leave on the career possibilities for women is not discussed. The omission of the discussion of what might be good for mothers might be bad for women as wage earners is an example of the political nature of the NAP. Write only the positive aspects of the policy.

Another example is to find in the NAP 2002 in which the revision of the Equal Pay Act and other initiatives with a view to promoting equal pay is discussed. In the presentation the different equal pay project and activities are mentioned, and it is emphasised that the Government wants equal pay to have a high priority on the labour market. But there is nothing written about the fact that the Liberal/Conservative government did postpone the wage statistics broken down on gender which was an element in the revision of the Equal Pay Act from June 2001 and which was a very controversial issue in the gender equality debate in Denmark. The national policy approach to close the gender pay gap after the change in government in 2001 is to a high level characterised by making no initiatives which can cost administrative burdens to the enterprises. Generally speaking it has not been easy to convince the Government about the necessity of improving the quality of statistics to make gender inequalities visible. It has often been questioned whether there was a gender gap at all, because it was claimed that the gender pay gap was only a product of the gender segregated labour market and not a product of discrimination.

## **The KBS strategy in the NAP's**

The discussion of the KBS is most directly present in the NAP 2002 and NAP 2003. In the NAP 2002 there is a discussions of the employment potential of the *knowledge-based society* and the service sector. It is stressed that during the period 1998-2001 commitments have been given for 30 development contracts for co-operation between institutions and enterprises about development projects focusing on management, organisation and competence development.

In the NAP 2002 it is pointed out that the acquisition of new knowledge is of huge importance in the knowledge-based society. It is the policy of the Government to stimulate the development of the knowledge-based society by removing a number of existing barriers to the diffusion and

exploitation of new information technologies and the promotion of co-operation between public authorities and private initiatives in this field. A business Innovator scheme will be launched as a 2-year pilot project from 2002 with the purpose of strengthening the exchange of knowledge between knowledge institutions and SME's with little experience of this kind of co-operation.

In the NAP 2003 it is stressed that it is of crucial importance that all persons have the possibilities of acquiring knowledge and skills, which are necessary to meet the working life conditions in the knowledge based society. Therefore the Government has made an action plan to combat the negative social inheritance.

The KBS policies outlined in the NAP's are both targeting individuals, organisations and public policies. In the NAP 2003 the effort for the government to create an inclusive labour market is going through:

- Promotion of the dialogue about an inclusive labour market
- Public subsidies in connection with recruitment of persons with reduced working capacity (flex jobs)
- Social chapters in collective agreements concluded by the social partners
- Promotion of corporate social responsibility (NAP: 2003: p 13)

If we look at the KBS strategy reflected in the NAP's to promote the development of human capital and lifelong learning the government is claiming that it attaches great importance to improving the quality and efficiency of education and training systems in order to equip all individuals with the skills required for a modern workforce in knowledge based society. It is important that there are few bottlenecks in the labour market.

Regarding the concrete initiatives from the Government the Danish Parliament adopted a reform of vocational education programmes to ensure a higher degree of flexibility, a lift in competences and a higher degree of targeting on different job profiles on the labour market. Further the Danish parliament adopted a reform of adult vocational training system to ensure a better cohesion in job oriented adult and continued training activities. The government want to make it more attractive to be in employment and this requires a supply of labour with high and relevant qualifications. The

initiatives in the Government's plan "*Better education and training*" are aiming at improving the conditions for continued and further training in a lifelong training perspective. It is of huge importance for the Government that there is also recognition of actual skills. The government present a very positive scenario of the KBS in the policy document, but the experts do not always share these positive scenarios.

*"We see a tendency towards that fewer people must perform more tasks. Off-course life long learning is important for the development of the knowledge based society, but it is crucial to emphasize that the single employees must be able to create long life learning for herself/himself. The formal qualifications are not that important. It is more important that you are constantly curious. The single enterprise knows precisely how to educate the employees to make them perform in a better way, they do not need big strategies on the knowledge based society"* (Vice-director of the Ministry of science, technology and innovation).

A new procedure has been decided for the NAP 2003 as a consequence of the revised Employment Strategy of the European Union from 2002. The NAP 2003 is focusing on the overall strategic priorities of measures in relation to the guidelines during the period 2003-2005. In 2004 focus will be on the implementation of the strategy and in 2005 there will be an evaluation of the activities in the previous years.

The NAP 2003 was carried out in the period from June to October. Earlier on the NAP was carried out from January to May. In the years to come all the ministries, social partners and NGO's participating in the drawing of the NAP must select a NAP-responsible person so the work with the NAP can proceed fast and efficiently. It is also planned that the parliament should be involved in the drawing of the NAP.

The change in the new guidelines means that the pillar structure was abolished. The new overarching objectives are:

- Full employment
- Better job quality and higher productivity at work

- Strengthening social cohesion and inclusion

In the introduction to the NAP 2003 it is stressed that the government quite recently presented the main elements for the remaining part of the election period and that the government will set up an independent expert welfare commission, which has to complete its job by the end of 2005. Also the Government tries to prepare for the expected ageing of the population by establishing a robust economy which can meet the change in the composition of the population with more elderly persons and immigrants with a low labour market participation.

It is mentioned again that the Danish level of employment and labour force participation is high compared to the EU average, especially among women and that Denmark has already met the Lisbon criteria of employment. But the objective is to obtain a further employment growth from 2003 till 2010. Since the change in government there has been a rise in unemployment by 30.000 persons. The Government explains the rise in unemployment with the economic recession.

The Government claims that the challenge of promoting an increased supply of labour in the nearest future is underpinned by a higher job quality and productivity at work. In 2003 the Government presented a plan to reduce the sickness absence. The purpose of this plan is to create a higher degree of job satisfaction.

## **Conclusion**

In general the NAP's 1998-2003 do not initiate new actions and activities. The NAP's primarily report on and discuss already existing initiatives. All the interviewed experts for this national report agreed about that the owner of NAP was the Government. Still the Government does not pay much attention to it.

The Danish NAP has a retrospective character used to legitimate what has been done and what has been achieved. It is clear that the NAP is used to present the politics of the government in a positive way. It can therefore to a certain extent be doubted whether the NAP is giving a true picture of the realities surrounding the employment situation. The NAP does not contain any discussions on the

eventually negative impact that the policy presented by the Government might have. It is evident that the government has asked the civil servants working with the NAP's not to include some areas and dimensions of the policy implications.

The public awareness about the NAP is not high in Denmark. The NAP is not discussed in Parliament, or in other political organs. It is circulating in the parliament for considerations, but in general the NAP's are never used in the public political debate.

The main KBS policies outlined in the NAP's have a broad perspective and are both orientated towards education, financing, infrastructure and support to framework building. The stakeholders of the KBS are both the producers and the users and the targeted groups are both individuals and organisations.

But the KBS discussions in the NAP's are in contradiction to the reports from the Ministry of Knowledge and Science not very specific regarding the KBS development and the measures needed to reach the goals. It can be doubted whether the NAP are relevant in the transition towards the KGB. There are few substantial discussions about the perspectives and obstacles on the road to the KBS society and how these issues dealt with in the NAP's can be viewed and interpreted in different ways. Further there are few analytically discussions on how the ICT based services can and will change the society.

In general, as stated in the OPTEM report 2002, there is a low acceptance of the gender mainstreaming strategy in Denmark, though the gender mainstreaming agenda is identifiable in all the NAP's. When gender equality themes are put on the public agenda it is rarely as a consequence of the European employment strategy.

Generally speaking the Danish NAP's are not gender mainstreamed. Gender equality is not an underlying theme in the pillars concerning employment, entrepreneurship and adaptability. It can be doubted whether the gender mainstreaming approach in Denmark can create equality between the sexes. It can both be a question about political oppression of the gender mainstreaming ideas and a question about lacking skills. There is little combination of KBS and gender mainstreaming in the Danish NAP's. The discussions of the KBS do only rarely include and promote questions related to

equal participation of men and women. The gender mainstreaming approach used in the NAP 2002 do consider aspects of both context, method and output, but the process of normalisation of the gender mainstreaming idea is not widespread in the Danish society. Though the important gender gaps are addressed in the NAP's the gender equality themes are not mainstreamed in the Danish society. The legitimating of raising gender related question is still difficult to obtain and there is no effective monitoring of the gender equality policy in Denmark. There is still a huge level of confusion regarding the question about whether gender mainstreaming is a methodology or a policy aiming at tackling gender gaps in numbers.

Gender mainstreaming is rarely seen as a progressive tool – more often it is perceived as an extra burden that civil servants must deal with. The dominating gender discourses in Denmark are not always in favour of a loosening of the gender power structures and do not necessarily “speak” for more women in power position. Recent public debates on women at the universities have shown that it is still legitimate in Denmark to claim that a high percentage of women at the universities have a negative impact on the quality of the research studies.

There is not an increasing awareness of labour market differences in Denmark between men and women. It is not easy to place a special emphasis on combating gender inequalities. The gender-sensitive policies are much weaker than the family-sensitive policies. A reason why the Luxembourg strategy and the gender mainstreaming policy has not been easy to implement in the Danish society has to do with the high employment rate of women and the small gender pay gap

The Danish EGGE expert wrote in the evaluation of the NAP 2001 why in general there was so little gender consideration in the NAP and why there was this “sameness” discourse existing in Denmark.

*“It may be due to the fact, that the Danish discussion of equal rights for women and men has been based on the concept of uniformity, homogeneity, and similarity of the two genders”.*



## **Literature**

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