

**UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing, Lisbon 20-22 September 2017**

Panel Discussion between Ministers and Civil Society Representatives

Recognizing the potential of older persons: Intergenerational perspective

**State secretary Christl Kvam, Norway - Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs**

## **Introduction**

- Thank you, madame Chair, for giving me the floor.
- I will address the intergeneration perspective from a macro level and concentrate my remarks around 5 elements that we in Norway believe are of great importance for keeping the balance between generations. This is very important when it comes to economical burdens and opportunities for good lives.

### **The five elements are**

- Economic Policy
- Pension reform
- Life-long learning
- Well developed welfare and health & care services
- Good balance between work and family life

### **Economic Policy (foil 1)**

- Norway has recently experienced a higher unemployment due to the fall in oil and gas prices. Many jobs disappeared as a result, and our job number 1 is now to create new jobs in new sectors.
- And our work force is 6 times more valuable for our nation than our National Petroleum & Pension Fund
- In the short run by stimulating job growth and counter-cyclical fiscal policy. We are true "Keynesians".
- In the long run by intergenerational balance of the economy.

Petroleum revenues are invested in the Government's Pension Fund. Holding back temptations to spend too much money too fast!  
(Not leave the bill to our grand-children)

### **Pension reform (foil 2)**

- A sustainable pension system is a very important element for intergenerational fairness and cohesion.
- Norway has had a gradual implementation of our overall pension reform from 2011 on, with long transition periods, and with a flexibility to early retirement at 62 but with the possibility to be a parttime worker
- The overall Goal is to attain Fair Balances of Benefits and Costs. Between generations, and between social groups within each generation
- In short we designed our pension reform so that the longer you work, the higher the pension amount per year, and vice versa

### **My third main element is Lifelong Learning (foil 3)**

- The government launched together with our social partners a national Skill strategy this spring.
- The social partners are preoccupied with the need of reskilling and upskilling the ICT competence – this is important to succeed in keeping elderly in the labour market.
- The digital transformation of our work-life is changing the skill profile of jobs.

- ICT skills are required in all but two occupations in the US (dishwashing and food cooking – and we will see how long that lasts! but even robotics will cook our food in the future)
- Like the ILO-director told yesterday, 56% of the adult population have no ICT skills or only basic ICT skills.

I think this underlines the need for reskilling and upskilling and that it is very important that elderly and senior workers keep themselves employable with the right competence in the future.

Life-long learning is a common responsibility – for employers and employees, for the education system,

**My fourth main element is a**

**Well developed welfare system, public health & care services**

A good provision of welfare is crucial for intergenerational solidarity.

We can work more and longer, and pay taxes, when we are sure of access to child care and long-term-care services for the old and frail.

Another aspect of a well developed system for long-term-care services in the municipalities (in Norway), is that it has contributed to a high level of work/employment for females all over the country, since it is mainly women who work in the care sector. The municipal care-sector is one of the biggest employer in Norway together with the hospital sector.

**My fifth main element is Balance of working life and family life.**

Good balance between work and family life has been very important in developing policies for ensuring the participation of parents in the labour market – both women and men.

These policies are a result of a broad support for family policies that foster work- family balance across all political parties – not just liberal/left.

It is a package of policies that explains the large portion of female participation in Norwegian labour market:

- Parental benefit scheme 49 weeks 100% paid for by the public social security system
- Easy accessible and affordable child care of high quality. Full coverage of kindergartens 1-6 years
- Father quota – 10 weeks can only be taken by the father
- Family-friendly and flexible working time <kuttet opplistingen>
  - Shorter workinghours when you have small children (under 3 years old)
  - 10 extra days off when taking care of sick children (and rights to work leave when caring for older family members)
- Law that ensure that no discrimination on the workplace can take place
- Strong motivation for girls to take higher education – 60% of our students in our universities are now women

***To sum up: It mostly comes down to keeping people at work.***

*Work is for most of us important for our health and our well-being.*

*We need the young and the old, the girls and the boys at work to keep*

*our welfare and welfare system sustainable. A sustainable welfare is*

*dependent on a coherent policy: We need to have a coherent life-course*

*perspective on education policy, labour market policy, family policy,*

*health and care policy and retirement & pension policy.*

## **Challenges**

I think we can be proud of a sound and sustainable intergenerational direction of the welfare policies, but I will not hide important challenges to continue to work on:

- Fertility rate & immigration
- The ratio between workers and non-workers has to increase rather than decrease
- Still more seniors can stay longer in work if they are employable
- Too many people leave the workforce too early through disability benefits
- A substantial and increasing number of young people drop out of school and fail to get a firm foothold into the labour market
- Part time work among women (especially nurses and carers)
- We have a relatively high employment rate and a low unemployment rate in Norway, but the overall employment rate is slightly decreasing. "We need all of us on the deck"

## **Closing remarks**

A coherent life-course policy is fundamental.

More people working, and seniors working longer.

Combined with education, skills and life-long learning,

Family policy and access to health and care

are essential to preserve intergenerational cohesion.

## Final statement

A coherent life-course policy is fundamental!

I think the ministerial declaration is paving the way for such a coherence.

But let me anyway mention that I miss the perspective of *individual responsibility* for being employable even as seniors. It is a shared responsibility: employer, education and our own will to continue to learn and up-date/ut-skill.

This is a dilemma that I would like us to be more open about:

If the only solution on longer work-life is costly senior advantages for 60+ workers, like more holidays, more flexible working hours, more training courses, there is a risk of making them less attractive for the employers.

I hope that in the implementation of the declaration, more emphasizes will be put on *how each and one of us can be more employable!* To be willing to up-skilling, re- skilling and mobility in order to take active part in a ever transforming working life.

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## The value of the work-force is six times more important than Norway's petrol resources



Arbeids- og sosialdepartementet

Tare

## Working population pr. pensioners



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Kilde: NAV

## The broad picture: Digitalization of work

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3