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GENDER STATISTICS IN FINLAND

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1. The organisation and resources for gender statistics in Finland

Statistics on women/gender have been compiled in Finland for a couple of decades. Sex is used as a variable in almost all statistical data relating to individuals, so the capacity for generating information based on gender distribution is fairly good. Yet, the gender perspective is not always taken into account in analysing and publishing the results.

Statistics Finland produces most of its data on women and men in its statistical sections, collecting and producing data on topics like population, family life, education, labour force, employment, wages and salaries, elections, crime, violence, etc. There is a co-ordinator and a network of experts in the different statistical fields for gender statistics. Joint and specialised projects and the production of compendiums are co-ordinated, managed and, for the most part, also implemented by the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator's post, originally a part-time task, was made into a full-time position in 1994.

Statistics Finland had no strategies or medium/long term plans for developing gender statistics before the Beijing Conference. This was partly due to the shortage and transient nature of the resources available for gender statistics. The activities converged on the ability to respond to practical situations and users' needs. Except for the daily co-ordination tasks, resources for more extensive activities, such as compilation of compendiums, theme publications, etc., had to be separately negotiated in each case. The only permanent resource was the co-ordinator. Additional resources have been researchers outside Statistics Finland who have participated in special projects without financial compensation.

2. Work undertaken after Beijing to develop gender statistics

The work done on gender statistics for the Beijing Conference - preparation of own publications, as well as preparation of and participation in seminars on gender statistics - played an important role in improving

the status of gender statistics. The Platform of Action paragraphs on statistics after Beijing provided a good basis on which a national plan for the development of gender statistics could be built.

A draft development plan was drawn up during winter 1996. A step towards giving gender statistics a better status was a seminar arranged for prominent users in the spring of 1996. In the seminar, the Finnish Minister of Labour, the Equality Ombudsman, a leader of a female-dominated trade union, the Chairman of the Legislative Committee of the Parliament, who has also been the first Finnish Equality Ombudsman, all gave presentations on their experiences in the use of gender statistics and put forward proposals for developing them further.

The Management Group of Statistics Finland discussed the draft development plan in August 1996 and accepted it with one reservation: resources for the development projects had to be agreed upon separately each year.

The existence of the plan has not only put gender statistics on a firmer footing, but also made the process of planning yearly activities easier. It also facilitated the recruitment of the additional resource of an assistant. The position of gender statistics co-ordination in Statistics Finland was reviewed. Gender statistics coordination now form a separate area of responsibility, which comprises two persons and is affiliated with the Population Statistics unit, where it also has most of its points of contact in areas like population and family statistics, educational statistics, statistics on elections and crime, and register-based employment statistics.

2.1. Plan for the development of gender statistics, 1996- 2000

The paragraphs on statistics in the Beijing Platform for Action offered a good basis for the plan. The existing statistics were reviewed in the light of these paragraphs. The areas of statistics which were found most in need of development included decision making, violence against women and economic participation/input of women and men, including unpaid work. The aim of the plan is to improve customer services, i.e. satisfy the need for information on equal opportunities for women and men in Finland in the most rational way which would also be ideal from the user's viewpoint, while ensuring that the information is provided in as flexible, rapid and comprehensive manner as possible. The development proposals of the plan cover the five-year period from 1996 to 2000. Project timings and resource allocations must be agreed and revised annually in co-operation with the various relevant units and statistical fields.

The plan contains proposals for improving both the contents and methods of statistics, for developing equality indicators, promoting liaison between users and producers in the development work, producing gender statistics at a regional level, and for disseminating the data more efficiently.

The proposals suggest areas in which activities should be improved, such as statistics on decision-making and exercise of power, violence towards women and men, participation of women and men in the economy, construction of satellite accounts describing unpaid work in conformity with national accounts and, in connection with these, creation of indicators of equality and equal opportunities between the sexes.

The proposals for more efficient dissemination of data include measures for publishing compendiums describing the position of women and men more regularly, starting active marketing of customised special studies based on Statistics Finland material, and exploiting electronic media in the distribution of gender statistics.

2.2. The Government's plan of action for promoting gender equality in Finland

The Finnish government's plan of action for promoting gender equality was published in winter 1997. The plan includes a chapter on statistics. The gender statistics co-ordinator participated in the preparation of the chapter. Mainstreaming has an important role in the promotion of gender equality. There, too, the role of statistics is important. The plan also proposes developing a new tool, the equality barometer.

"The development of statistics is necessary when integrating a gender perspective into state administration. Gender impact analyses set new requirements on statistical data and their processing. The various authorities and Statistics Finland will evaluate the existing statistics as a part of the mainstreaming project undertaken at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health..." "The Finnish government wishes also to monitor citizens' impressions about gender equality and changes in the situation. Therefore, a new tool, equality barometer, will be developed and produced at least every other year to provide information on the experiences of women and men regarding gender equality in personal relationships, family life, organisations, working life and the society." The plan also highlights the co-operation of Statistics Finland and the users on the development of equality indicators.

2. 3. Work since 1996 and plans for 1998

a) Decision-making

The second study on women and men as leaders in the private sector concerning situation in 1993 and the changes from 1990 to 1993 was completed in 1996. The results were published in Finnish in autumn 1996 and in English at the end of 1997. To get comparable statistics on leaders in both the private and the public sector, a project for determining the leader professions in the public sector was implemented in the autumn of 1997.

The work on a publication of statistics on women and men involved in the decision making processes in various sections of the society continues. It will be published as a pilot publication. Also another publication focusing on data on leaders in the private and public sectors will be produced at the end of 1998.

b) Violence against women and survey on women as victims of violence

The extent of violence against women will be established with an interview survey of victims of violence. The survey was undertaken jointly by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and Statistics Finland in 1997. The results will be published during spring 1998. To compile basic statistics on violence against women, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and Statistics Finland have initiated an analysis of existing documents on criminality and family life.

c) Internet home page

The new electronic media, Internet, was introduced in Statistics Finland in 1996. A pilot home page of gender statistics was compiled in the winter of 1997. The page contains, in Finnish and English, those statistics on women and men which are normally published as fact sheets every second year. The available resources have not been sufficient for developing or enlarging the contents of the home page further.

d) Equality barometer

Planning of the barometer was done by Statistics Finland in co-operation with the sub-committee on women's studies of the Council for Equality in the autumn of 1997. The necessary data were collected by interviewing about 2 400 persons in the 15 to 74 age groups, that is, a rotation group of the Labour Force Survey of January 1998. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The questions concerned women's and men's impressions and experiences of gender equality; their attitudes and experiences regarding gender equality in personal relationships, family life, organisations, working life and the society. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health finances this first equality barometer. The initial analysis of the results will be done quite thoroughly. The results will be ready in the autumn of 1998.

e) Unpaid work

Development of a European Satellite System of Household Production has been financed as Eurostat SUP.COM-project. This work is described in a separate paper presented by Statistics Finland. The final report will be published in Autumn 1998.

f) Equality indicators

Work on equality indicators will start in conjunction with the reporting on the results from the equality barometer. The first stage will entail finding indicators suitable for use as background data, the 'hard facts', for the barometer.

g) Follow-up and revision of the Finnish government's equality plan, including the mainstreaming projects

The monitoring group undertaking the follow-up and revision of the equality plan consists of representatives of various ministries. Statistics play an important part in the implementation of the plan, especially in the mainstreaming process, and in making violence against women visible. The implementation of the mainstreaming project will proceed gradually. At present, there are only small, limited pilot projects in the ministries. The gender statistics co-ordinator participates in the follow-up and revision work, as well as in the steering group for the mainstreaming pilot projects.

The mainstreaming project will intensify co-operation between users and producers. Data requirements for gender impact analyses and new requirements on statistical data and their processing will be developed in the integration of the gender perspective into state administration. Evaluation of the existing statistics with different authorities will be done during the mainstreaming process.

Reference material:

From Beijing to Finland, The Plan of Action for the Promotion of Gender Equality of the Government of Finland, Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 1997:20, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Helsinki 1997

Outline plan for the development of statistics on equality between the sexes/ gender statistics, 1996-2000, Statistics Finland, Social Statistics, August 1996 (partly updated February 1998)