

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE REPORT

# Towards a sustainable future world of work in the Nordic countries

The gender perspective on the opportunities and challenges



## KEY MESSAGES

Labour markets in the Nordic countries are changing rapidly and constantly. The green transition and digital developments are creating new demands. What needs to be done to enable sustainable development based on human rights and gender equality? NIKK's new publication on the future world of work in the Nordic countries highlights the opportunities and challenges for a sustainable working life from a gender perspective.

Some of the report's key messages are:

### The changing role of education

- ▶ The strong division of the labour market, with men and women largely in different sectors, is broadly similar to the distribution of students in different streams of the education system.
- ▶ Today's education is characterised by an instrumental approach, with a strong focus on creating an employable workforce. Education rewards the use value of knowledge, with employability as the ultimate goal. In this way, the gendered nature of occupations and professions risks being unproblematically recreated and reinforcing the division of men and women in the labour market.
- ▶ If the learning of skills is increasingly linked to specific occupations, there is a risk that gender differences in education and training will be reinforced, both in terms of the types of education and training chosen by boys and girls and in terms of the content of the knowledge they acquire.
- ▶ A strong focus on employability and lifelong learning also carries the risk that the individual's educational and career path becomes the focus, while structural barriers and enablers are overshadowed.

### Increased teleworking

- ▶ The increase in teleworking is widening the gap between those who can work from home and those who cannot – between salaried employees and manual workers. Many jobs that support society in health, education, care, services and transport cannot be done remotely. Most of these sectors are heavily female-dominated and many occupations in them are characterised by low pay and precarious employment conditions.
- ▶ Teleworking often leads to more paid work and an increase in unpaid work at home at the same time. For employees who can carry out their work at home, an unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care work risks cementing traditional gender roles.
- ▶ Increased opportunities for teleworking are expected to affect migration and travel patterns. Projects aimed at attracting teleworkers to sparsely populated areas are often based on the idea of the teleworker as a young man without a family. In order to achieve sustainable development, child and gender perspectives need to be taken into account.

## Changed working methods

- ▶ The gig economy has clear gender norms. Discrimination based on gender, ethnicity and migrant status is widespread.
- ▶ The gig labour market is highly gender-segregated and a gender stereotype is reproduced in relation to who works at what. Women and female-dominated gig industries have lower wages than male-dominated ones and work is often done at home – their own or others. Gig jobs in male-dominated industries are often carried out in public spaces.
- ▶ The norm of the ideal worker as male, flexible, without disabilities and without any caring responsibilities is particularly strong in the gig economy. There is a risk that gig work contributes to segmentation and increased inequality by trapping people in unattractive low-paid jobs with precarious working conditions. Newly arrived immigrants, for example, may be at risk of becoming stuck here.
- ▶ The norm for the ideal entrepreneur as a man is also strong: flexible and without caring responsibilities, with large networks of contacts and high venture capital. Men's entrepreneurship is what counts and is the benchmark for women's entrepreneurship. Gendered perceptions and expectations both produce and reproduce entrepreneurship in ways that uphold the norm.

Read more in the report [Towards a sustainable future world of work in the Nordic countries - The gender perspective on the opportunities and challenges](#)

*As a cooperation body of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Nordic Information on Gender (NIKK) is to contribute to realising the Council's Vision 2030. NIKK's areas of activity all deal with one or other of the major challenges of our time and are based on the global sustainable development goals (SDGs). By communicating a gender perspective on urgent questions, NIKK strives to contribute to sustainable solutions for social development in the Nordic countries.*