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# The Nordic Paradox

## Creating a Competitive Edge Conference

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Oslo, 08.11.2017

# Nordic Gender Equality Model-thinking

- Helga Hernes 1987: The Nordic countries embody a state-form that makes it possible to transform them into «truly woman-friendly societies».
- Sylvia Walby 2009: Groups the Nordic countries as more equal than others.
- Ruth Lister 2009: Nordic countries as nearly «nirvanas» of gender equality.
- Martinsson, Griffin & Nygren 2017: Criticism of the mythical mantra of gender equality as a Swedish/Nordic trait.

# Global Gender Gap Report 2017



**Measurement based on four, very crude, indicators:**

- Economic participation and opportunity
- Educational attainment
- Health and survival
- Political empowerment

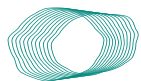
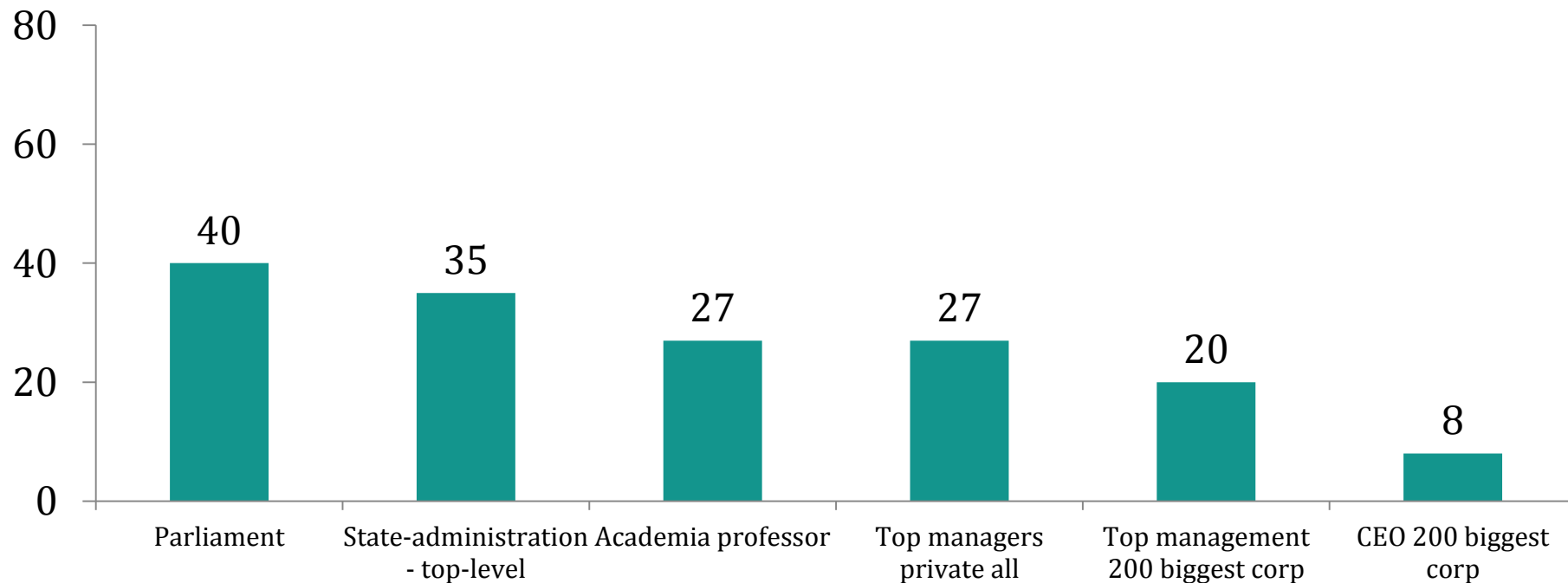


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# Nordic region's gender equality success

... relies more on success in participation than  
in career advancements

# Proportion women in top management by sector in Norway



# WHAT PARADOX?

## COMPARATIVE

Gender equality has progressed successfully in the Nordics, but in top-positions the situation is as bad as in less gender equal countries.

## NATIONAL

Gender balance in top-positions is skewed and not in line with the recruitment base of women candidates beneath.

# EXPLANATIONS?

## 1. WELFARE-STATE PARADOX

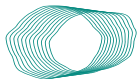
Opportunity structures favor men – and male-typical «lives»

## 2. GENDER EQUALITY PARADOX

Institutional arrangements foster inclusion and participation, but not gender equal careers

## 3. NO PARADOX

Women are less career oriented





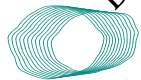
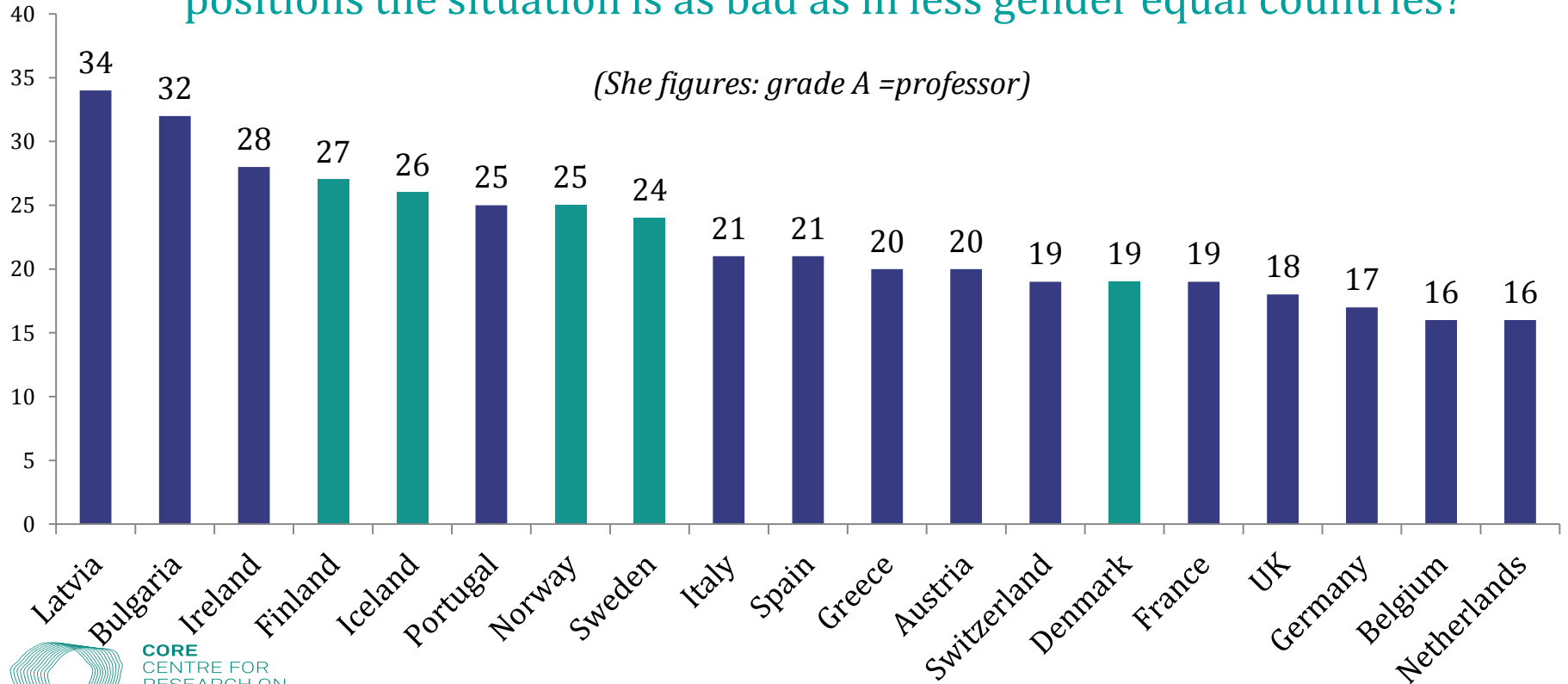
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# The Gender Equality Paradox in Academia



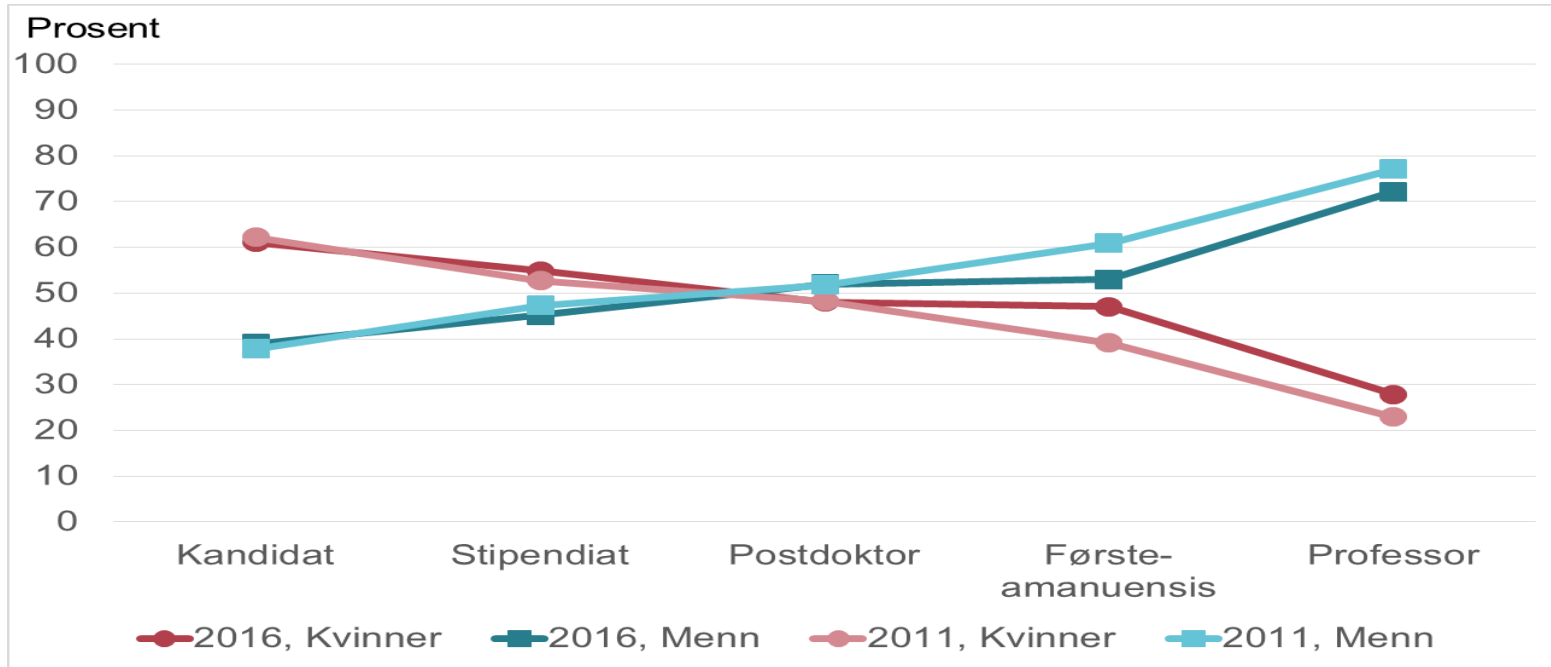
# Paradox 1:

Gender equality has progressed successfully in the Nordic countries, but in top-positions the situation is as bad as in less gender equal countries?

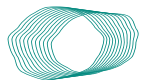


## Paradox 2:

Gender composition in top-positions is skewed and not in line with the recruitment base of women on lower levels.



Source: NIFU/DBH



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# Main idea:

- To study gendered aspects of academic careers in a comparative labor market perspective
- Work-family reconciliation
- Cultural norms – evaluation cultures and implicit bias
- Research policy and gender equality policy – on collision course?



More information:

[www.samfunnsforskning.no/core/nordicore/english/](http://www.samfunnsforskning.no/core/nordicore/english/)

# Research careers, gender and family dynamics

- We will study work-family reconciliation across labor market contexts.
- We ask whether Nordic family-friendly policies contribute to a greater acceptance of lagged careers – with increasing negative consequences for gender balance as expectations to academic careers intensifies? Whether transitions out of academia is «plan B» or preferred choice?
- We compare – quantitatively and qualitatively – men and women with PhD who work inside and outside academia with the ambition to explain and understand institutional constraints on gender balanced career opportunities.



# Gendered perceptions of competence and hireability

- Is there a gender bias in perceptions of men's and women's competence and hireability in academia?
- We will study this question by conducting a field experiment among tenured academic staff in Iceland, Norway, and Sweden
- The aim of the study is to uncover the relevance of gender and caring responsibilities on faculty's considerations of hypothetical candidates for tenure track positions



# Evaluative cultures and practices in recruitment

We will study how meritocratic ideals are played out in recruitment processes:

- We ask how academic gatekeepers think about scientific excellence?
- We ask how evaluative practices vary across organizational contexts?
- We ask what we learn about academic recruitment by studying through a gender lens?



# Evaluation of gender equality policies

- We will map institutional gender equality policies of Norwegian universities and study the correlation between such policies and changes in the composition of the work staff over time?
- Mapping of gender equality policies across sectors in Norway indicates that academia is really in a group of its' own compared to others in introducing policies.
- But we do not know whether they are effective in counteracting challenges to gender balance?



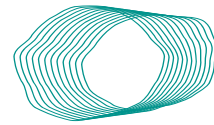


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# Gendering research policy



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