

# Gender Equality The Iceland Story

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GenderStrat4EQquality  
Strategic Partnership



# Gender Equality

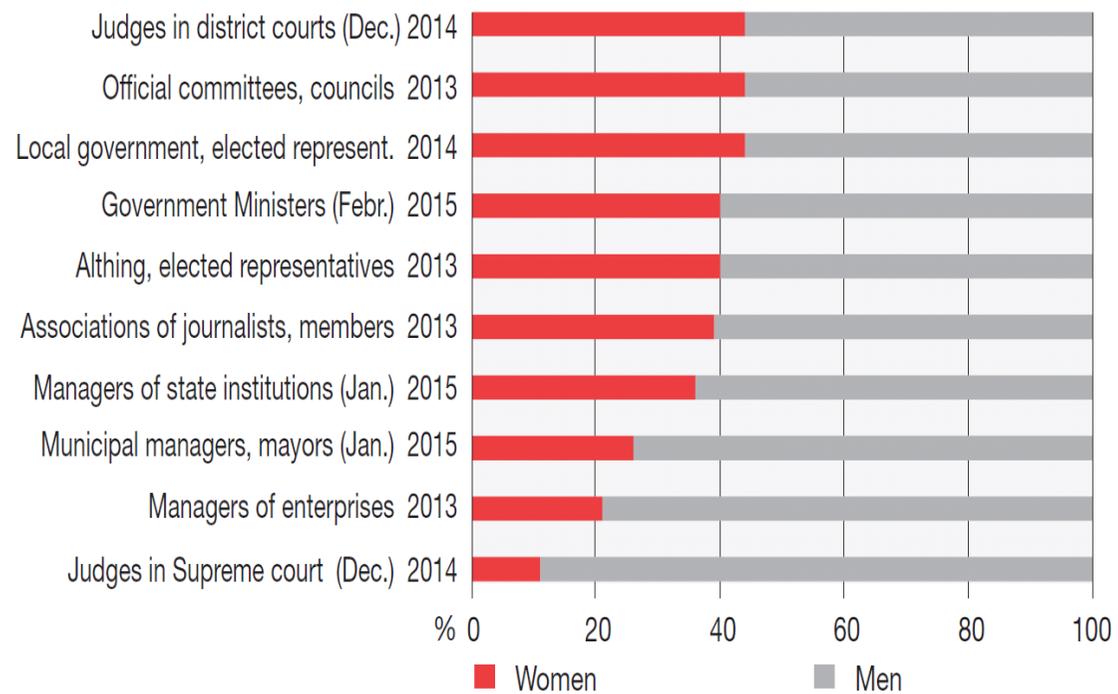
- Iceland has topped the *World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index* for the last seven years.
- The main reasons are equal rights and equal opportunities in education, good health care, as well as women's success for the last 30 years in increasing their political power.
- The weakest side is gender equality on the labour market.
- Iceland is not yet a Women's Paradise!

# Methods used

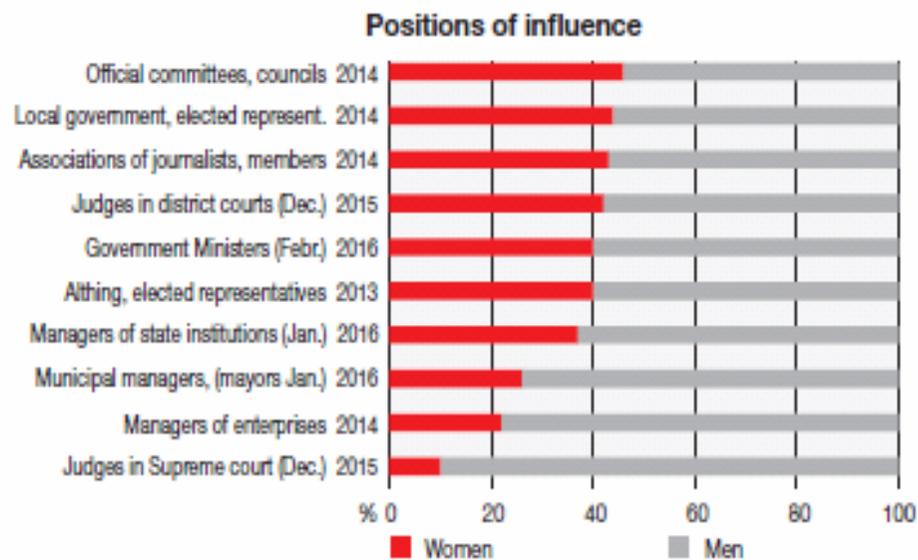
- Legislations
- Institutional mechanisms – The Centre for Gender Equality, The Council for Gender Equality and the Complain Committee.
- Negotiations on the labour market, positive duties.
- Affirmative actions
- Quotas
- Actions, lobbying and pressure
- International obligations

# Gender and Power

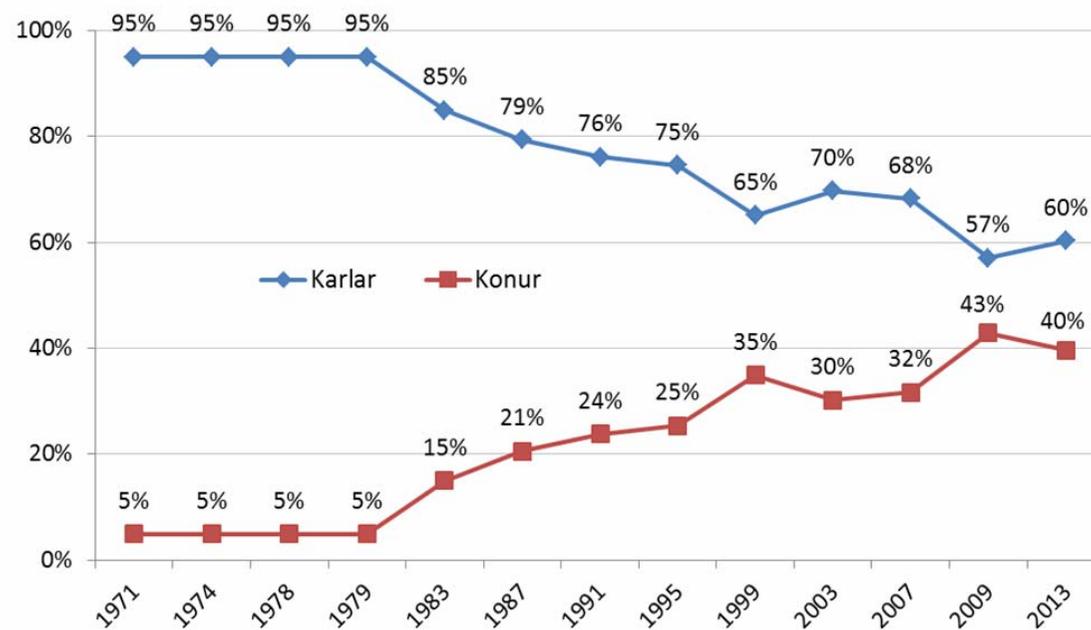
Positions of influence



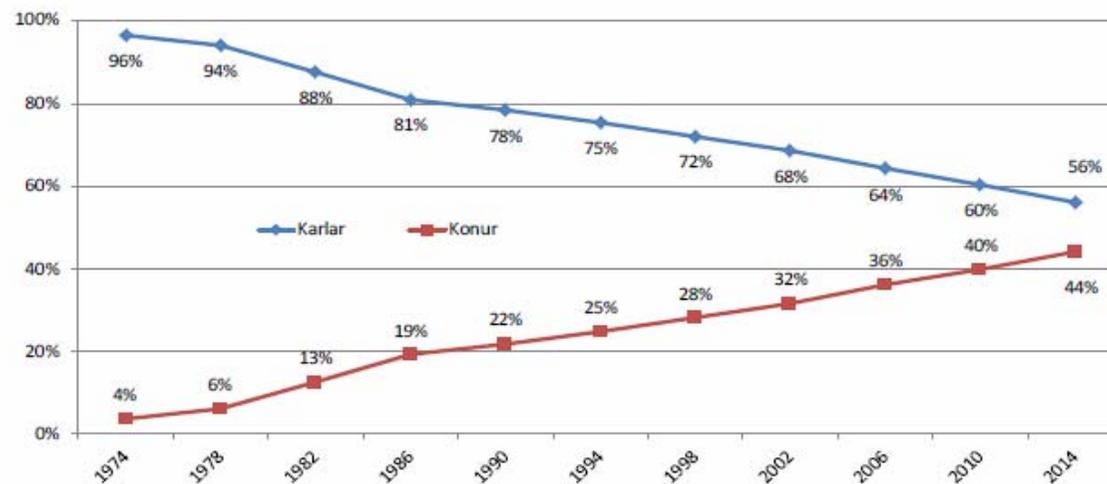
# Positions of Influence



# The parliament - Alpingi



# Local governments 1978-2014



**35. Mynd: Kjörnir fulltrúar í sveitarstjórn, eftir kyni 1974–2014**

Heimild: Hagstofa Íslands.

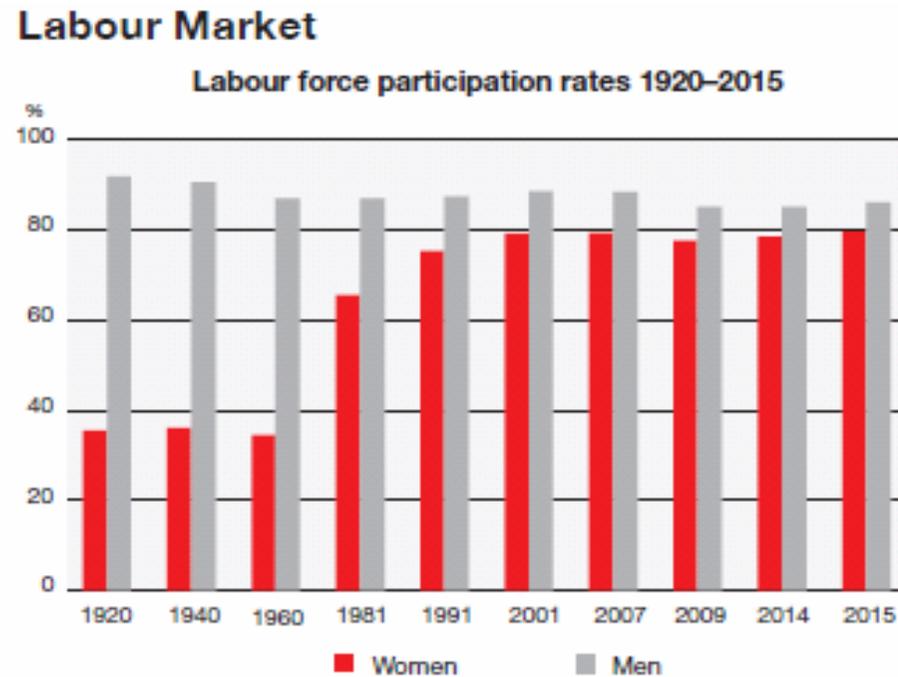
# The history

- The Icelandic society has gone through transformation in the last 50 years.
- One of the main reasons for economic growth in this period is the growing participation of women on the labour market.
- Both the private and the public sector needed more people into the workforce. The resources were found among women.
- Social movements - Women's movements, played a crucial role in developing Iceland towards a society that more or less respects equal rights of women and men.

# The history

- The participation of women on the labour market in Iceland was fairly high before the 1960's due to the needs of the fishing industry and low family income.
- Between 1960 and 1980 the participation of women grew from 36% to 63%.
- Changes in the fishing industry, the growth of the service sector, the creation of the welfare system and the need for teachers to serve the “baby boom” generation, created “jobs for women”.

# The Labour Market 1920-2015



# The history

- In stead of supporting the one bread winner model, the policy makers, pushed by a strong women's movement, enhanced the dual earner model.
- In 1957 the parliament decided that married women should only pay a 50% income tax, which meant that 50% of their wages was tax-free.
- The 1957 act is an example of an affirmative action meant to make it easier for married women to enter the work force.
- Around 1960 new contraceptives came into the picture.

# The history - legislation

- In 1961 an act on equal pay for equal work
- Act on free, but regulated abortion 1975.
- In 1976 the parliament passed the first act on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and men. The main focus was on equal rights on the labour market.
- The act has been revised four times. Partly because of changes in local policies and social developments, partly because of UN policies (CEDAW and Beijing platform for Action).

# The history

- Since 1976 the act on Gender Equality has mainly focused on equal rights on the labour market. After 2000 positive duties on behalf of the enterprises came into the law.
- The role of the women's movements and the labour unions in shaping a more gender equal society is crucial. The 1970's was the time of the Red Stockings Movement, which mostly focused on the situation of women on the labour market.
- Equal pay, child care, better organisation of the school day, equal sharing of housework, reproductive rights and maternal leave were on the agenda.

# The Women's Strike in 1975



# The Women's Strike 2005



# The history

- The 1980's was the time of the women's lists. They put new issues on the agenda, such as the importance of equal representation in policy and decision making, violence against women and children and all the „old“ issues.
- In the 1980's and 1990's family policies based on gender equality began to take shape.
- Maternity leave and later paternity leave was developed, from only being the right of women, working in the public sector, to women and men on the labour market as a whole. New law in 2000.

# The history

- Explosion in the educational system – loans for all students.
- Day care services were build up all over the country.
- Primary schools were reorganised, with meals in schools and longer school days.
- Financial support for single parents improved.
- Services for elderly people were reorganised.
- A strong health care system was build up.

# The history 2015

- 100 years since women got the right to vote for parliamentary elections.
- The young generation is on the move. Feminist organisations in many colleges, “Free the Nipple” and “Beauty tips”, fighting stereotypes, pornography and sexual violence against girls and women.
- Fighting hate speech.

# Free the Nipple



# Fighting sexual violence against girls and women



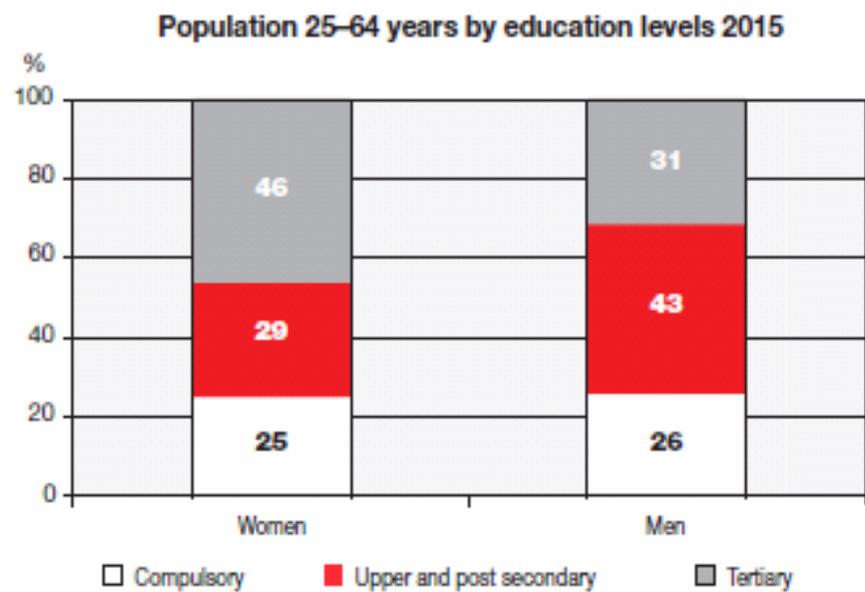
# Challenges

- Iceland is neither a paradise for women or men!
- Men in general still have a long working week on the labour market and that effects the family and the sharing of housework.
- Most women still bear the double burden of work and family responsibilities.
- Professions where women are in majority are under valued.
- Education has not secured gender equality for women.

# Challenges

- The level of women's education is growing fast, while the "drop out" of young men is a problem. What will the consequences be in the future?
- Women are still a minority among those running enterprises, but it is changing rapidly because of the quota legislation (2010).
- The gender pay gap is narrowing very slowly
- Sharing of housework is not equal and it is very traditional. The big change is in the caretaking an upbringing of children.

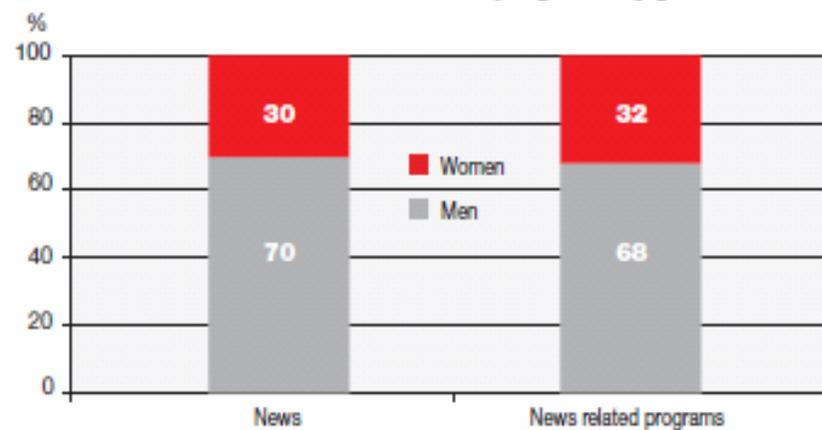
# The Education Gap



# Gender and the Media 2014-2015

## Media

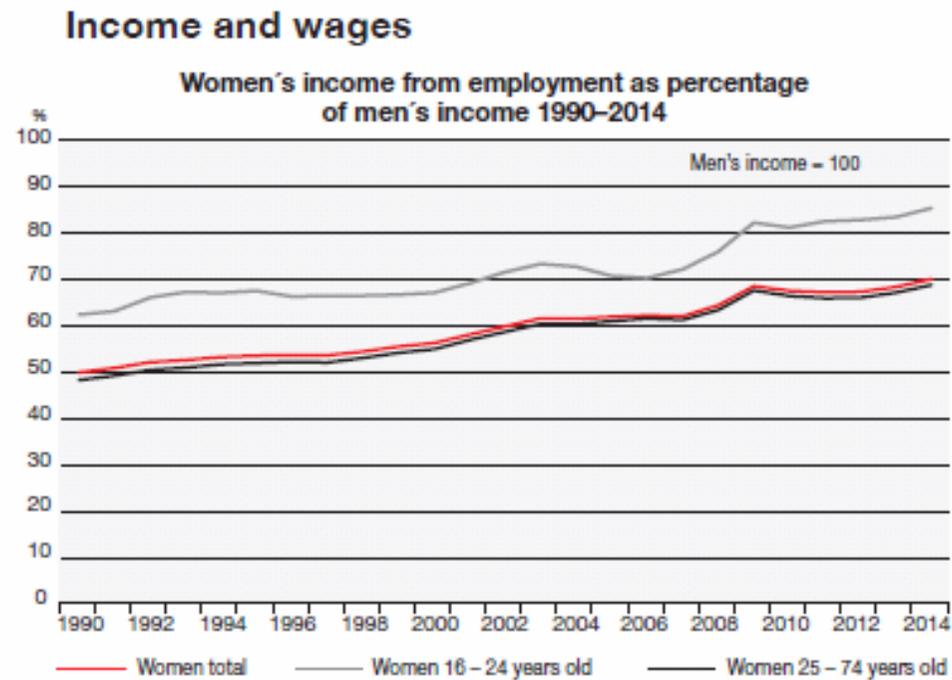
Interviewees in news and news related programs by gender 2014-2015



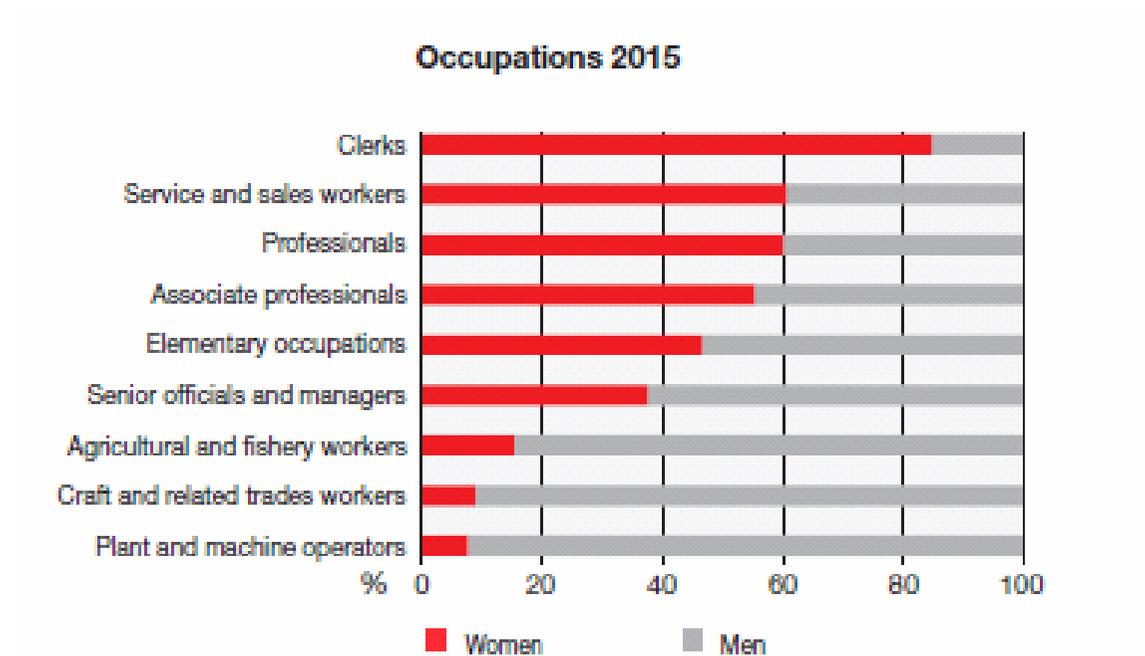
Note: Interviewees in news and news related programs at RUV and 365 midlar (Bylgjan and Stöð 2) 1 September 2014 – 31 August 2015.

Source: Creditinfo for the Ministry of Welfare (2015).

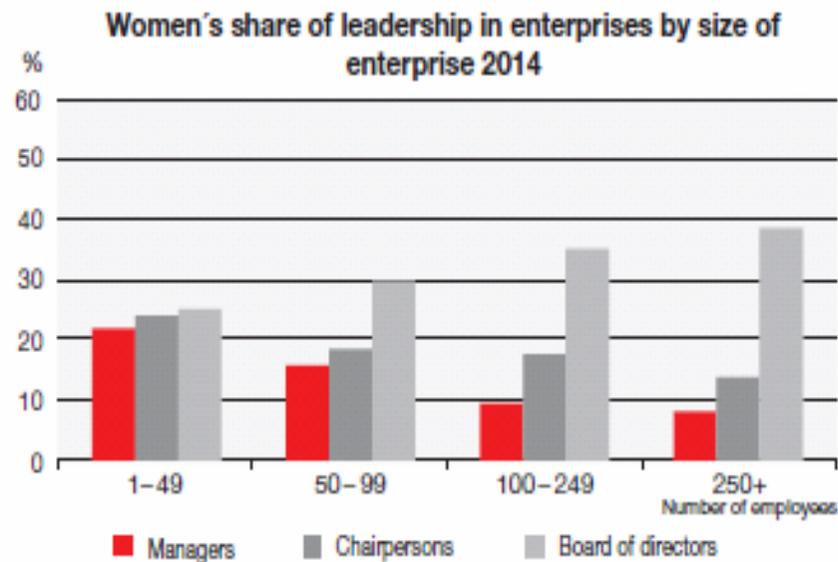
# The Gender Pay Gap



# The Gender Segregated Labour Market 2015



# Women's Share of Leadership in enterprises 2014



# Challenges

- The gender segregated labour market is one of the reasons for gender inequalities. Stereotypes are difficult to change.
- Violence against women is extremely worrying!
- The young generation seems to be more conservative than their parents concerning gender equality, but there are also other ideas around.
- How can we motivate men to take part in the discussion about gender equality. We need to discuss men and masculinities.
- What will be the long term consequences of the economic crises and climate change?

# Challenges for Europe

- Gender is not only about men and women. There are LGBT people, who lack human rights.
- Migration and refugees are a challenge to our culture, not least to gender equality.
- Climate change is also a huge challenge.
- Europe is facing new times and we must protect gender equality and human rights!

# Conclusions

- The Icelandic society has gone through transformation in the last 50 years.
- One of the main reasons for economic growth in this period is the growing participation of women on the labour market.
- Both the private and the public sector needed more workforce. The resources were found among women and women wanted and needed work.
- Social movements played a crucial role in the development of Iceland towards a more gender equal society.

# Conclusions

- Last but not least Icelandic legislation secures equal rights for almost all kinds of families:
- Single parents, same sex parents, and families where parents live together (married or not married) or separated.
- But – in Iceland as in most other European countries the population is getting older.
- So the goal must be to secure that enough people work and can work and have children.
- Gender equality is the most effective tool to reach those goals!

# Conclusions

- Gender equality is a smart business!
- It is a question of respecting human rights and creating a more equal, just and fair society!
- So, what shall we do now?
- Education and training is very important. We have the tools, but money and political will is lacking. More pressure is needed!!!