

CONSLUSIONS

Nordic-Baltic seminar

WOMEN IN THE POLICE - CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

31.05 - 01.06.2017

Conference Center of the Ministry of Interior, Riga, Latvia

The **Nordic-Baltic seminar *Women in the Police*** gather together over 50 representatives of the Nordic and Baltic police forces, Nordic and Baltic experts on gender equality and researchers to discuss the changes and challenges in education, working life and leadership from a police and gender equality perspective. Additionally, also recruitment processes, harassment, and gender equality and diversity policies were discussed.

In the session about **education** the Nordic and Baltic educations for police officers were discussed. From the Nordic side it was proposed that the police education should be an education at university level, because today the police is an organization that must have the ability to change skills and activities to meet the demands of the society. This means that the recruitment process to police education also should focus on gender equality and ethnicity to ensure that women and men representatives from all groups in our societies are represented in the police force. It was suggested that the police education in the Nordic countries also could arrange specialist police programs for experts with university exams, because it would make it possible to recruit specialists, e.g. to investigate economic crimes. In Latvia the State Police College arranges six months professional education program *Basics of Police Work* for persons with university education. Today 25-50 % of all students at the Police Colleges and Academies in the Nordic and Baltic countries are women.

The session **working life** discussed challenges women and men in the police meet trying to combine family and working life. Other questions discussed were: is age a problem within the police and why do women stop to work in operational services?

The speakers gave proposals on how persons can meet the challenges and pressures of **combining working and private/family life**:

- Focus on long term strategies for the staff and strengthen resources through more educated police officers
- Recognize the extraordinary work pressure, both on the police as well as their relatives, e.g. arranging meetings, for relatives and staff, where the management explains the conditions of the police work, acknowledges the fact that the police work can have a cost for the private life and gives input how to support both parts; the police officers and their families
- Good management, meaningfulness to the assignments and listening to the staff as well as good planning and good collegial relations are steps to better balance between work and private life
- What can a single person do? A person can create better routines to separate work and private life, e.g. find ways to mentally shut down the work before going home

In the discussion proposals on how **to support women working in operational services** were presented:

- Operational units should include a mix of competence as age, interests and gender, because research shows that working places with both women and men are more creative and better to solve problems. A gender balanced working place also reflects the society the police is serving.
- A gender balanced working place has a great impact on the working society.
- Create more flexibility around shift work; do the operational services have to include shifts around the clock?

Today the organizational changes and pension reforms have resulted in a **more ageing police force**. Persons working within the police today have longer careers need support during the whole police career. The operating environment within the police is also changing and thus tasks must be reorganized and prioritized and the work must be manageable. The content of the work has an effect on motivation, values and attitudes!

In Finland a project within the police focusing on **the age** started after the pension reform in Finland, and the result is that police officers will stay longer at work. The project has looked for solutions to get better job satisfaction throughout the longer career in the police.

The proposals for actions to be taken are:

- Efforts to increase the appreciation of expert duties by career planning and communication
- Introduction of description and discussions of career paths for ageing police officers
- Recognition of needs, evaluation and mapping of competence
- Develop mentoring system for all ages
- Analysis of obstacles and outline measures to women's career progress
- Flexibility - wider use of current working time models
- Develop methods for acknowledging and rewarding employees by means not involving money, as different flexible working time models

Leadership in the police was discussed from different perspectives: the challenges of women as leaders in a male dominated organization, and the recruitment processes within the police. During the discussion proposals for supporting women in the police were presented:

- First of all find out why women stop to work within the police.
- Most crucial is to have a broad recruitment process to the police.
- Attract both women and men with different talents and backgrounds to the police.
- Reduce the importance of physical strength in the recruitment process.
- Develop strategies how to keep the women, who have chosen to be police officers
- Find and support the men leaders, who support policewomen in their work.
- The Police as an organization that must be changed to integrate more women. Bigger numbers of the women in the police is not the solution.
- Find earlier the female leader talents
- Career planning - listen to women's wishes and plans
- Inspire and coach young leader talents
- Higher retirement ages - women need longer time for their career
- Recruitment processes should be changed to be more transparent

In the discussion about leadership *Rasa Stasiulaitiene* said that there is not "one best way" to build up a career. She said that it takes a long time to build up a career to reach a top position; it is good to build up an added value, and to get to know the rules of the male

dominated organization. *Sigríður Björk Guðjónsdóttir* said: "as everything is changing around us we, the police, also have to change", and "it is a challenge to be a chief", and she continued: Never let the hindrances win!!! *Krista Aas'* formula of success is talent, passion, people, priorities, and responsibility. She said that the passion for excellence means that all people do their best all the time and they enjoy what they do. Diversity is to treat everyone as equals and value differences. Aas also stressed the importance of managing the time-schedule to have both time at work, but also time for the private life and family. Aas said that responsibility as a leader also means to be a good role model.

All the speakers stressed that it is important to like what you do, and that you must have clear goals and visions for your work.

The discussion about **harassment** and **gender equality and diversity** gave an overview on work to stop harassment and how to integrate gender equality and diversity in organizations.

Harassment in an organization usually exists due to lack of information, vague aims and decisions, and lack of equality. The persons takes part in discrimination, harassment or offensive treatment undermine the community at work and the health of other persons causing individual injury as well as affecting the safety and efficiency in the working place. Harassment is the responsibility of the chiefs, and all kind of harassments should immediately be reported and addressed. All cases of harassment within the police should be investigated and more information should be spread within the personnel, so persons know how to deal with harassment, when a colleague is harassed. Police organizations need action plans, strategies and handbooks for how to handle all forms of harassment.

Gender equality is still today often considered as a women's question, and thus empowerment and other strategies suggest that "the women should be fixed", which means that gender equality policies becomes a problem for the women. Gender is not a minority question. Instead it should be focused on the content of the culture and the structures of the organization and find solutions to change the organizations to become inclusive. Research shows that organizations have to work with norms in male and female dominated, i.e. gender based organizations, to create more inclusive organizations. **Diversity** means that the focus is on different categories in our societies as: ethnicity, sex, age, handicap, sexuality and religion. To work with gender equality and diversity means to reflect and work with norms and privileges. Inclusiveness can have a lot of positive side effects, when other categories as the norm is also accepted and recognized. To just work with diversity is not enough.

Proposals how to work with gender equality and diversity:

- Create awareness on culture and how culture works
- Reflect and work with norms, privileges, and visibility
- Support ambitious leaders who really wants to see change
- Work with inclusiveness in practice

The discussion about quotas - should quotas for women and men be included in the police recruitment processes for students and leaders - showed that the participants were both for and against introducing quotas. One answer, to the question about how to change an organization to be more gender balanced and supportive for women, was: Political decisions are a tool for change, and as the police is a state authority it can be changed with political decisions if the organization is not able to integrate gender equality and diversity.