

**Equal opportunities and
work life balance
in an economic perspective:
direct and indirect effects**

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1. DIRECT ECONOMIC ASPECTS

- Equal opportunities and work life balance can be studied and justified from many perspectives: human rights, democracy, sociology, quality
- This presentation is focusing on the economic perspectives - direct and indirect economic effects



Point of departure

- Equality between women and men, and work life balance, is a basis for demographic balance and labour participation, and a sustainable economy
- A sustainable economy is a basis for equality between women and men
- A crisis is a opportunity, a possibility for change



EU reduction of economic and social disparities

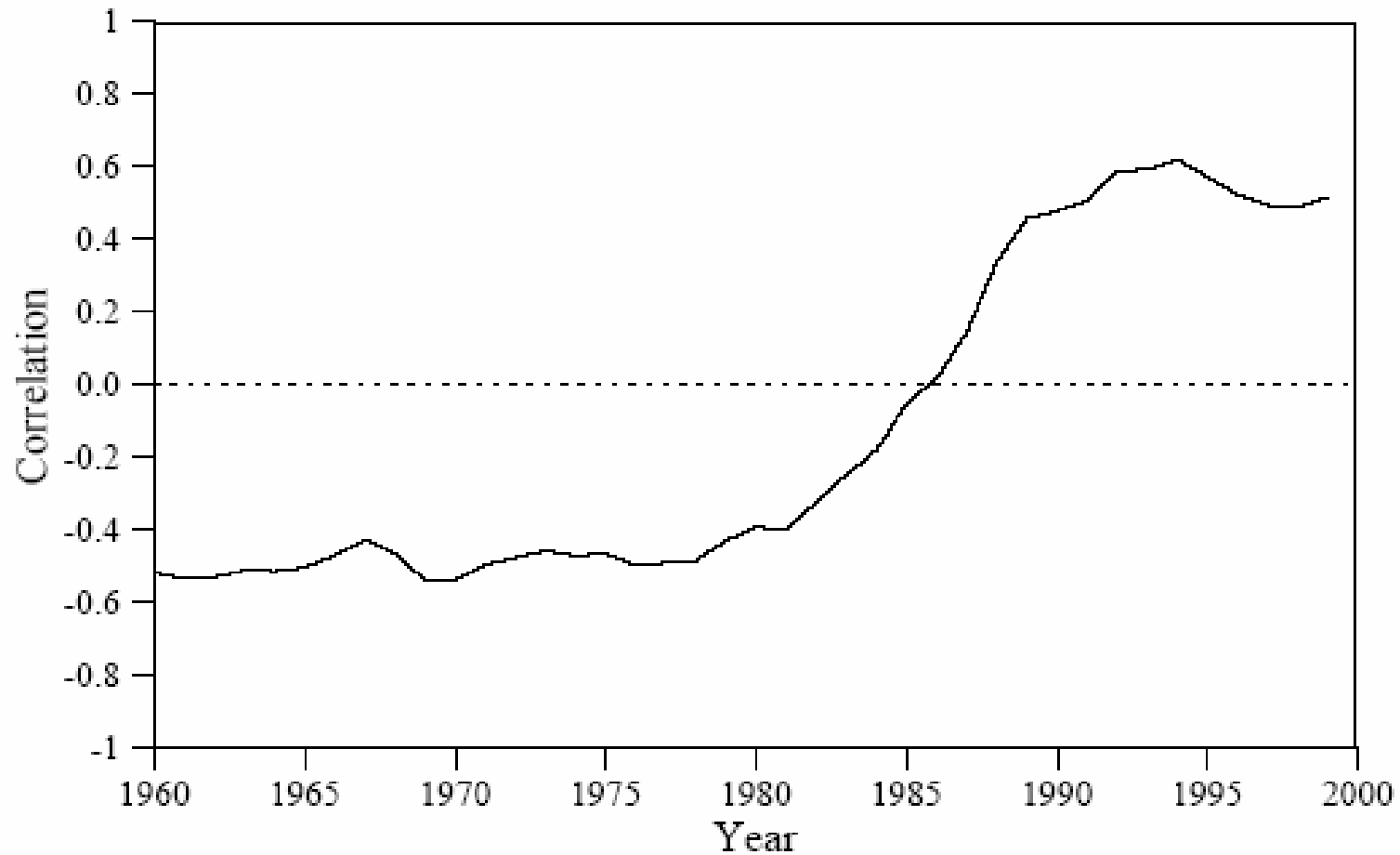
- 1996 Communication, “Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all community policies and activities”
- 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, “Elimination of inequalities and promotion of equality between women and men”
- 2006-2010 Roadmap for gender equality
- 2006 The European Council European pact for gender equality
- 2008 European Commission communication on a better work life balance
- 2010 European commission women’s Charter regarding Gender Equality strategy 2010-2015



EU Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2010-2015 September 2010

- Equal economic independence
- Equal pay for equal work and work of equal value
- Equality in decision-making
- Dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence
- Gender equality in external actions
- Horizontal issues (gender roles, legislation, governance and tools of gender equality)

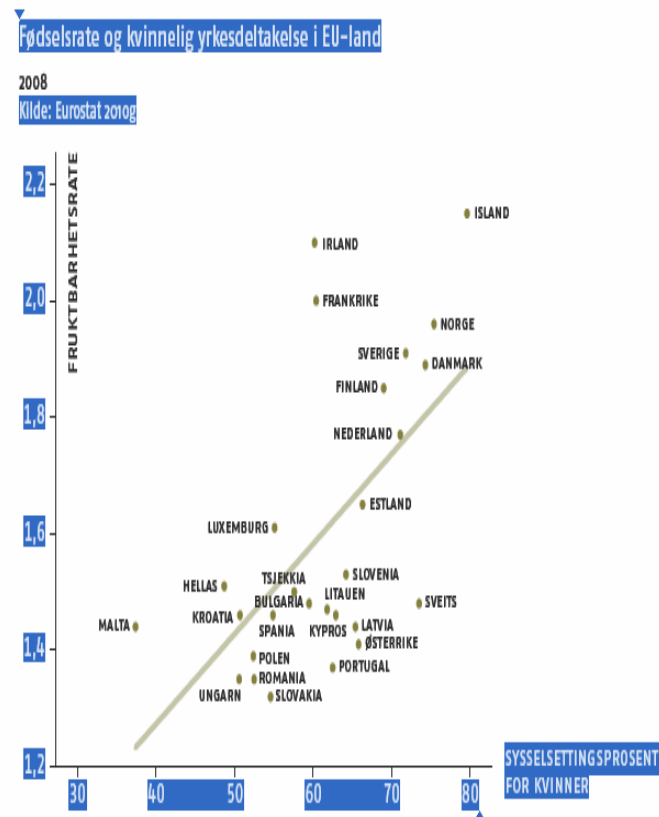
Correlation between level of female employment and rate of fertility



Source: Engelhardt, Henriette, and Alexia Prskawetz. 2004. "On the Changing Correlation Between Fertility and Female Employment Over Space and Time." *European Journal of Population* 20: 35-62 (figure 2) Source: Wilkinson & Pickett, *The Spirit Level* (2009)

Effect on birth rate and demographic balance

- WLB makes it easier for couples to have children
- The sustainable birth rate is 2.1. The rates in Europe vary between 1.3 and 2.2.
- Low birth rates means future economic problems; few adults to enter into the labour market.



FIGUR 2.7

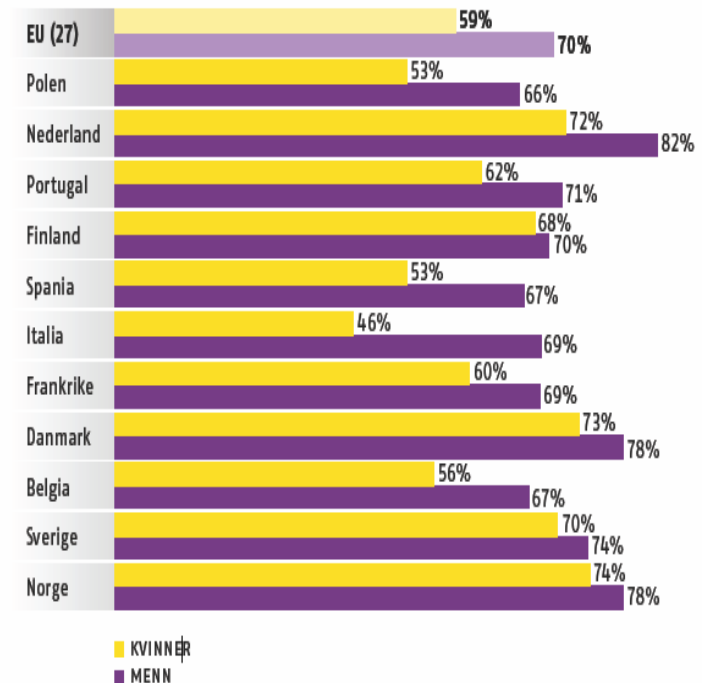
Effects on employment

- WLB implies new jobs, e.g. kindergartens and institutions, public sector management
- New jobs implies increased employment rates and a more flexible labour market
- There is a positive link between women's employment rate and Gross National Product

Sysselsatte etter kjønn, utvalgte land

15-64 år, 2009. Prosent

Kilde: Eurostat 2010a



Effects on taxes and consumption

Taxes

- 2 salaries families generally earn more than 1 salary families -and pay more taxes

- Taxes are the basis for all public services: schools, hospitals, kindergartens, transport, institutions

Consumption

- 2 salaries families generally consume more, - especially if they have children

- Higher consumption is positive for private sector: restaurants, shops, factories, services

2. INDIRECT ECONOMIC ASPECTS

- Utilizing all human resources
- Better care for the elderly
- Effects of unemployment
- Effects of immigrant unemployment
- Effects of day care
- Effects on social capital
- Effects on male role
- Effects of postponed retirement
- Effects on productivity
- Effects on Innovation

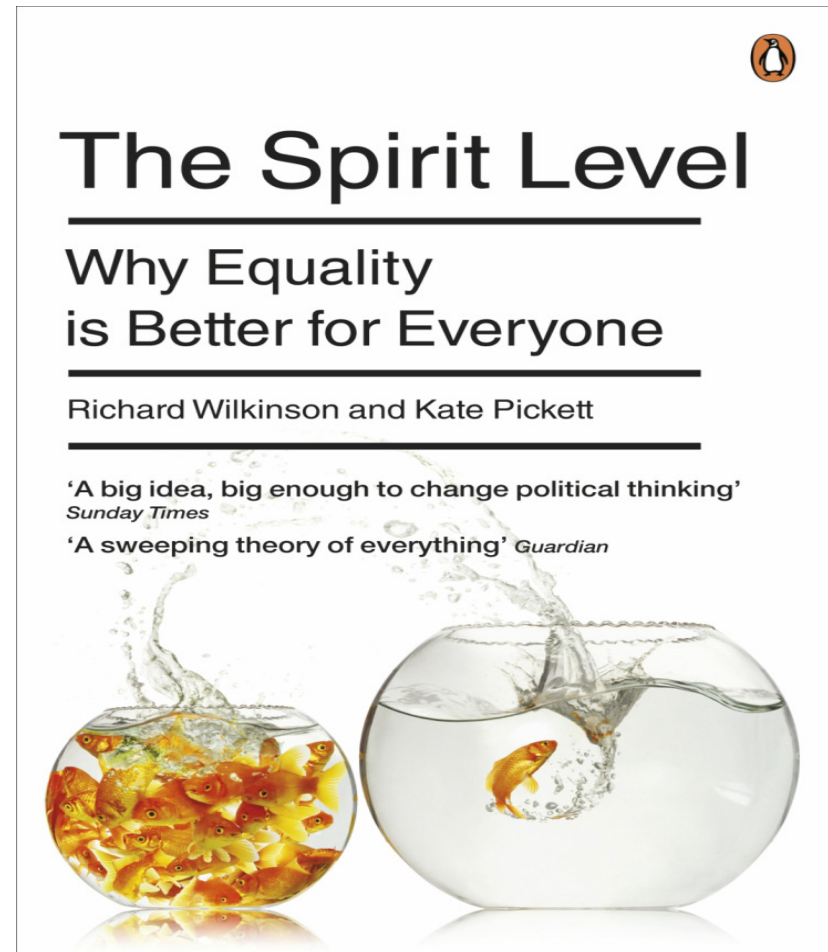


3. GENERAL EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC EQUALITY

Main message

Society benefits from greater economic equality – not only the poor – but the whole population.

Examples: Life expectancy, literacy, infant mortality, homicides, imprisonment, mental illness, drug addiction, trust.....



4. GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT

Equal opportunities and WLB develop gradually – through

- EU policies and legislation
- National political processes and legislation
- National social processes, and discussions, e.g. dissemination of ideas
- National social dialogue between the parties
- International projects, and exchange of learning

