



**CAREER  
PARENTS  
AND MODERN FINNISH  
FAMILY ROLES**



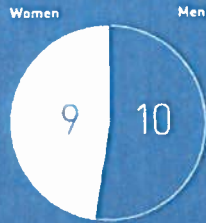
**FREEDOM  
TO FOLLOW YOUR  
OWN ASPIRATIONS**

**GENDER  
EQUALITY  
IN FINLAND  
MEANS CHOICE AND QUALITY**



Front page photo.  
**MODERN BIGGER FAMILY**  
 Henrik and Maria Lindberg have five children. Maria is a priest, which often means weekend work. Henrik is the producer of a morning programme and has to wake up early. Siri, 13, and Astrid, 11, are increasingly independent, but Ivar, 5, and the two-year-old twins, Elvi and Iton, keep the parents busy.

**MINISTERS IN THE GOVERNMENT OF FINLAND (2013)**



**WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE**

FINLAND  
1906

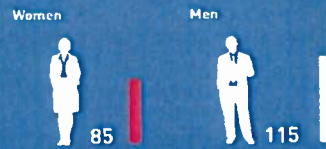
AUSTRALIA  
1902  
NEW ZEALAND  
1893



**FIRST PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 1907**



**PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2011**



**GENDER EQUALITY**

**TOP TEN\***

- 1 Iceland
- 2 Finland
- 3 Norway
- 4 Sweden
- 5 The Philippines
- 6 Ireland
- 7 New Zealand
- 8 Denmark
- 9 Switzerland
- 10 Nicaragua



\* Source: The World Economic Forum 2013

## FINNISH VALUES AS A FOUNDATION FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

to meet state functions, and should do so with equal rights and develop our abilities without external pressure or constraints related to gender.

Gender equality has been a key value in Finland since the country gained its independence. Equality is governed by the Constitution of Finland and the Act on Equality between Women and Men. The Finnish Government is committed to promoting gender equality. The authorities monitor the implementation of equality between women and men, address concerns and seek to promote equality through decision-making. The active examination of new equality issues is integral to equality policy in Finland.

Finland was among the first countries in the world to grant women the vote and the right to stand for election. This was achieved in 1906, and 19 women were elected to the parliament in the first parliamentary elections in 1907. Today, gender equality quotas are applied to decision-making to ensure equal participation and fair decisions.

In our time, non-discrimination and human rights lie at the core of equality. Equality is an extensive human rights issue related to cultural differences, age, social status, physical and mental capacity, religion, sexual orientation and gender diversity. Non-discrimination is a cornerstone of human rights. Finland seeks to promote equality from the perspective of diversity, as part of people's daily lives.

*Pirkko Mäkinen, the Ombudsman for Equality, serves as an independent authority within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, monitoring the implementation of the Act on Equality between Women and Men. The Ombudsman provides advice and counselling on issues related to the Equality Act and publishes an annual report.*



### GENDER EQUALITY IS MONITORED AND ENFORCED BY OFFICIAL AUTHORITIES

**Equality Unit, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health**  
Responsible for the Finnish Government's gender equality policy preparation and coordination

**Ombudsman for Equality**  
Serves as an independent authority within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, monitoring the implementation of the Act on Equality between Women and Men

**Equality Board**  
An independent committee that monitors compliance with gender equality legislation and discusses and resolves issues related to the legislation

**Council for Gender Equality**  
A parliamentary committee appointed by the Finnish Government for the duration of a parliamentary term. Promotes gender equality in society

#### Minna — Centre for Gender Equality Information

Collects and provides information on equality between women and men and research on gender equality. Serves a diverse group of users: authorities, politicians, equality organisations and operators, students, researchers, the media and anyone interested in gender issues

For more information, please see [www.stm.fi](http://www.stm.fi)

[www.minna.fi](http://www.minna.fi)



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**IT  
TAKES  
JUST  
ONE  
BRAVE  
FORERUNNER.**

1870



**Marie Ischelschulin**  
Matriculation  
exam taker

1878



**Rosina Heikel**  
Licentiate of  
Medicine

1882



**Emma Irene Åström**  
Master of Arts

1895



**Karolina Eskelin**  
Doctor of Medical  
Sciences

1905



**Jenny Markelin**  
Road engineer  
constructor  
inventor



DE LISITZIN, ELISABETH









## THE FIRST WOMAN DIPLOMAT IN FINLAND AND THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

**Elisabeth de Lisitzin** (born Elisabeth de Lisitzin in Moscow, 1874) during a trip to Moscow, Finland, she studied in Helsinki and saw the world. After leaving her mother's home in Moscow in 1892, she went to study in Paris and graduated in 1897. She graduated with a Licentiate of Laws from the University of Helsinki. She worked as a legal counsel at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After World War I, she was appointed Elisabeth de Lisitzin as a diplomat in H. H. von der Haugwitz's mission.

In 1931, she graduated with a Licentiate in Laws. Even though women had been admitted to the Foreign Service, Finland was not yet ready to send a woman abroad as an ambassador. Elisabeth left the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and worked as a legal counsel for embassies of foreign nations in Finland. In 1941, she was hired by the national news agency. As a sworn translator of seven languages, she was responsible for foreign news during the Second World War. After the war, she worked as a journalist and author, and became a patroness of the arts. She died at the age of 90. During her life, she witnessed the extensive progress of equality, not only in diplomacy, but in many other fields of society as well.



The pictures on the previous page represent women portrayed on Helsinki, a street style blog from Helsinki. The blog documents individual, unique looks and styles. The blog was started in July 2009 and it is created by Liisa Järven and Sanna Karjalainen.

1918	1926	1927	1938	1942	1955	1958	19
							
<i>Agnes Sjöberg</i> Doctor of Veterinary Medicine — the first woman in Europe	<i>Miina Sillanpää</i> Minister of the Government, culturalist trailblazer	<i>Alma Söderhjelm</i> Professor	<i>Eugenie Kivistin</i> Doctorate in physics	<i>Feva Linden</i> Doctorate in the Finnish language	<i>Lusia Oterma</i> Doctorate in astronomy	<i>Vieno Rajaoja</i> Doctorate in economics	<i>Inker Frute</i> of Let

## THE FIRST WOMAN BISHOP IN FINLAND

*Hija Askola, first and only woman in Finland to receive a doctorate in Theology, is the Bishop of the Diocese of Tampere. She is also a social justice activist.*

She holds a Master of Theology in Sociology of Religion. She pursued further studies in Germany and the United States, and completed training in ecumenical leadership in Tanzania. She was ordained in 1988, putting her among the first women priests in Finland, and became the Bishop of Helsinki in 2010. In her role, Askola is a pioneer of equality in many respects, for instance, taking a stand in favour of sexual minorities. Together with Anja Porio, she has also authored collections of poems that discuss — with a gentle understanding — the challenges women face and the support they can give one another.



MANA SCHWARTZ

1961



*Inkeri Brittilä*  
Professor of Law

1976



*Sirpa Rautio*  
Municipal manager

1988



*The first 94 women were ordained priests*

1990



*Elisabeth Rehn*  
Minister of Defence

1994



*Riitta Uosukainen*  
Speaker of the Parliament

2000



*Tarja Halonen*  
President of the Republic

2000



*Titta Lindqvist*  
Officer, senior lieutenant

2003



*Anneli Jaätteenmäki*  
Prime Minister



MILAS HELTO

## THE FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT OF FINLAND

*Pauliine Koskelo, Master of Laws with court training, born on 27 June 1956, is the first woman serving as President of the Supreme Court of Finland. Before her appointment, she was a member of the Supreme Court for six years. Her previous positions include General Counsel at the League of Nations, Director of the European Investment Bank.*

When Koskelo began to serve as President of the Supreme Court of Finland in 2006, she was its youngest member. Over the course of her career, she has served as secretary or member of many state committees and Nordic working groups. In addition, she has represented Finland in many international bodies and preparatory commissions. Koskelo is known as a proponent of judicial system reforms. Even though she avoids publicity because of her work, she is an inspiration for young women in Finland.



## CAREER PARENTS AND MODERN FINNISH FAMILY ROLES

*Kaisa and Pasi Kaitila are career-oriented family people. They prefer to take vacations, and their child care arrangements are flexible, informal, and often better. They work for each other, as well, and have an alternative model of work-life balance that includes work and family.*

Kaisa Kaitila, 36, is a biologist by training and works as a clinical trials manager. Pasi Kaitila, 34, holds a Master of Science in Technology. He is a founder and partner in a growth company specialising in creating optimal working environments. The couple have two children: son Joel, 5, and daughter Aada, 3.

Kaisa and Pasi met online. Otherwise, they may not necessarily have ever met, as they hail from different parts of the country. Both were driven by a desire to find "the one" and start a family, and they are happy with their choices.

The family lives in Espoo, in the capital region, and Kaisa's workplace is within walking distance. Kaisa and Pasi wanted to settle in an area where day care is nearby. Pasi works in the centre of Helsinki. He takes the children to day care in the morning, and she picks them up on her way home from work.

"We both have to travel on business, which sometimes calls for special arrangements," says Pasi.

Fortunately, they can telecommute when necessary. They can also rely on their support network: his parents, her mother, her brother and his wife or the children's godparents are only happy to look after Aada and Joel.

After both of the children's birth, Kaisa took her annual holiday entitlement after her statutory maternity leave, which enabled her to spend 13 months at home with Joel and 16 months at home with Aada. Her employer supports new parents and pays the full salary for those on statutory maternity leave for the first four months.

Pasi took statutory paternity leave after Joel and Aada were born. When Joel was a baby, Pasi took the paternity leave in two parts. This allowed him to help his son adapt to day care at the age of one. Pasi took paternity leave when Aada was born and an additional six weeks a year later, when the family took a trip they had been dreaming about for a long time. In other words, Aada travelled to Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia with her father, mother and brother before she had even learned to walk.



*Pasi takes the children to day care in the morning, and Kaisa picks them up on her way home from work.*



Kaisa and Pasi take turns attending to some of the household chores, while others are divided between the two of them more permanently. Pasi bathes the children and goes swimming with them at the public swimming pool. He is the one who usually gets up if one of the children wakes up at night. Kaisa cooks, does the laundry and buys clothes for the children. Pasi irons his shirts and empties the biowaste bin. The children like helping out with the chores and love baking.

Joel and Aada attend a music playschool in conjunction with their day care centre. Pasi and Joel work up a sweat together at parkour practice. Aada takes dancing lessons at a school that focuses on improving coordination and enjoying exercise instead of perfectly disciplined performance.

What are Kaisa and Pasi dreaming about today? Many of their dreams have already come true, and the present ones are small and practical.

"I look forward to the day when I can go running with Pasi again," says Kaisa.

"Perhaps our tenth anniversary will finally be a good enough reason to take a little holiday, just the two of us," Pasi says with a smile.

#### TO HAVE A BABY IN FINLAND MEANS:

- Maternity grant. Maternity package\* or a cash benefit of EUR 140.
- Maternity allowance\*\* will continue to be paid after the child is born.
- Child benefit\*\*\* will be paid from the month following the birth of the child.
- Maternity leave is 105 working days.
- The mother or the father can take a parental leave of 158 working days after the maternity leave.
- The father is entitled to receive a paternity allowance for 54 working days during paternity leave.
- The father can take a paternity leave of 1 to 18 working days while the mother is still receiving maternity allowance.
- The rest of the paternity allowance can be paid after the maternity allowance and parental allowance periods.
- The mother and the father can take parental leave in turns, for a maximum of two periods of 12 or more days.
- A parent is entitled to take unpaid leave and stay at home with a child until the child is three years old, without losing his or her job.

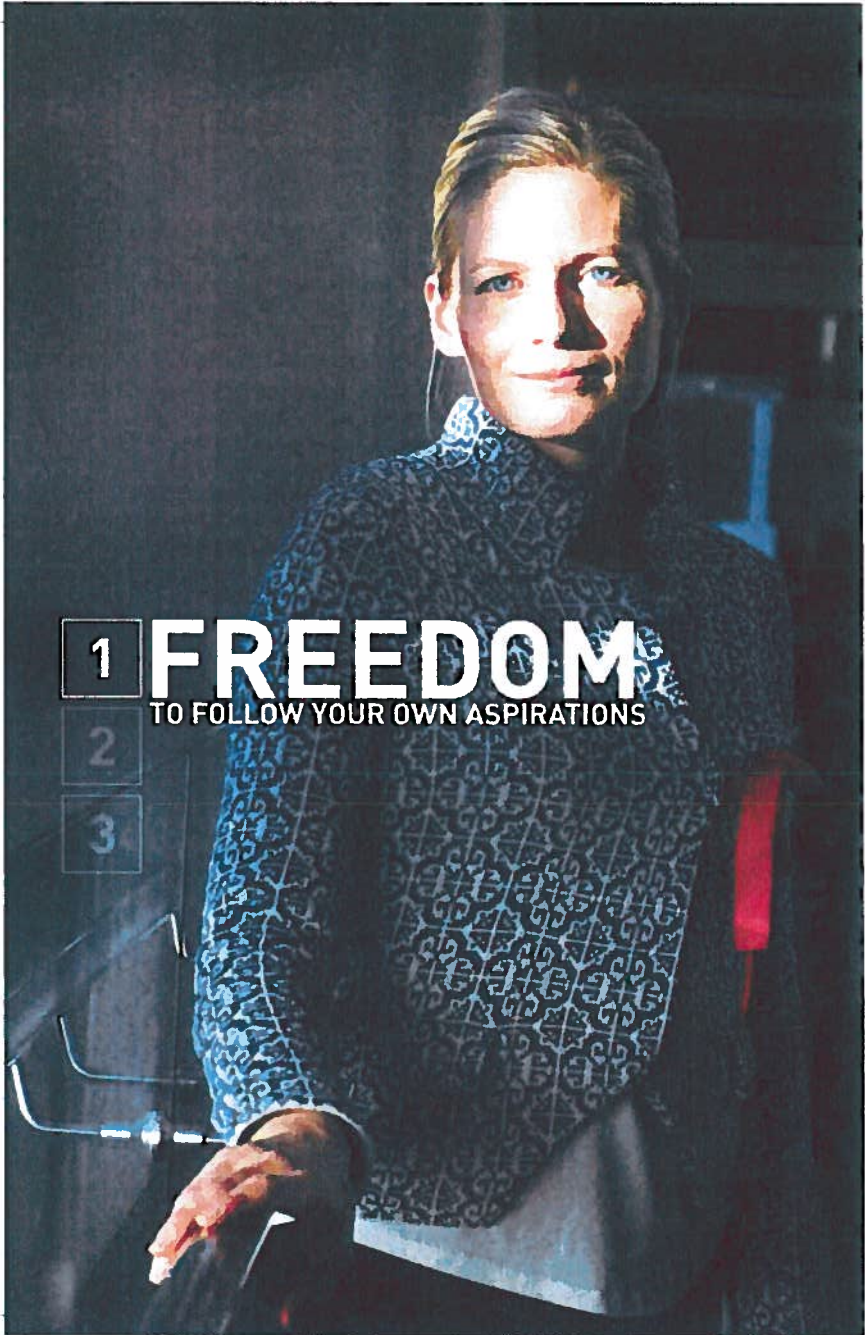
\*A maternity package contains clothes and care supplies.

\*\*The amount of the maternity or parental allowance is based on taxable income.

\*\*\*The child benefit is determined based on the number of children. The minimum amount for one child is EUR 105.

More info: [www.kela.fi](http://www.kela.fi)





# 1 FREEDOM TO FOLLOW YOUR OWN ASPIRATIONS

- 2
- 3

## SCIENTIST ANNA-LIISA LAINE

*Academy Research Fellow, Aquatic Biologist*  
Anna-Liisa Laine is a leading Finnish environmental ecologist and biologist. In November 2012, she was awarded the title of Adjunct Professor of the University of Helsinki for scientific courage. Laine has also been nominated for the prestigious Finnish Award for Women's Science.

In addition to scientific courage, Laine has shown courage by combining scientific work with family life. At work, she heads a research group in the ecology of disease at the Department of Biosciences of the University of Helsinki. At home, she is a mother of two: son Pyry, 5, and daughter Lumi-Maria, 2.

Born in 1975, Laine specialised in biology at university. A summer job as an assistant in a group researching the interactions between plants and herbivores inspired her scientific interest in ecology, plant diseases and parasites. After completing her doctorate in Helsinki in 2005, Laine carried out postdoctoral research in California and Australia. She established her research group in 2010.

In practice, international research cooperation can mean as many as 60 travel days in a year. Anna-Liisa's husband and mother are nothing but happy to take care of the children while she is away for business. Anna-Liisa's mother, a retired research professor, is one of the reasons why Anna-Liisa never hesitated to embark on a career in science.

*Role models are essential for the career development of young women as scientists.*

Role models are essential for the career development of young women as scientists," says Laine. All too many women give up during the postdoctoral stage, because combining family life with a career as a researcher is challenging. However, it is more of a lifestyle choice. Finland offers practically free day care and education for children. As all schools are of a high quality, children typically attend their local school, which is usually within walking distance.

For these reasons, Anna-Liisa has decided to stay in Finland. She admits to having considered a professorship in the United States, but school arrangements for the children proved to be complicated. Because Laine had already gained international recognition, it was easy for her to establish a research group and recruit top researchers to Finland.

In her group, duties are divided equally between the members.

"Men and women are assigned equally challenging projects, and everyone participates in practical arrangements. Men are not exempt from making coffee, and women are perfectly capable of handling technology," she says with a laugh.

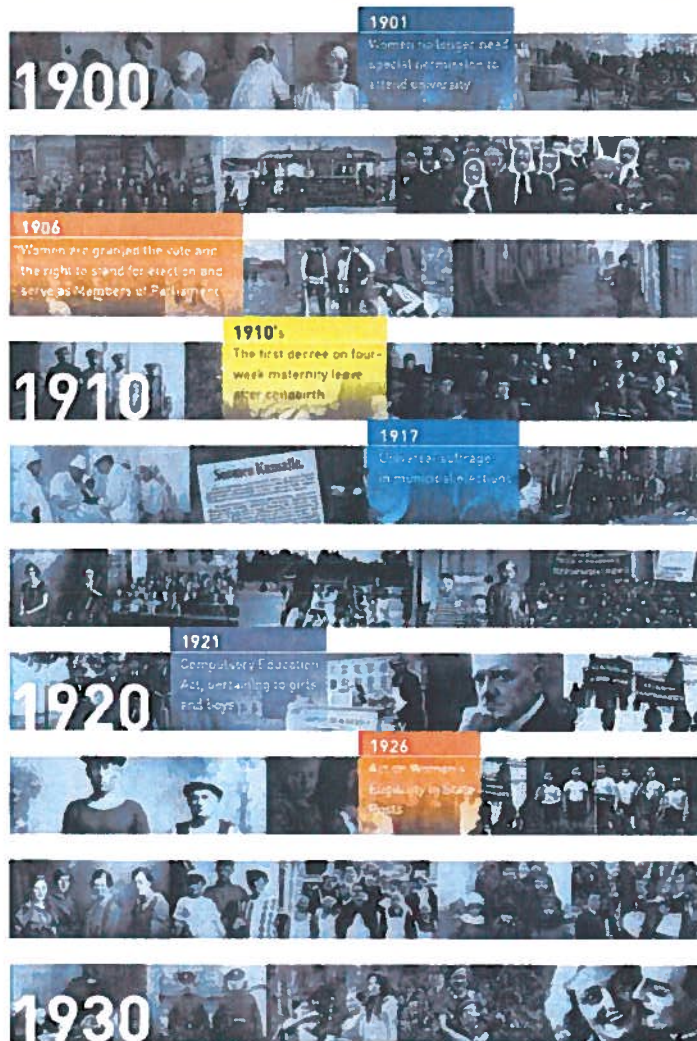
#### SCIENCE GOES TO KINDERGARTEN.

Curiosity generates science. Anna-Liisa Laine's research group organised a series of workshops for preschool children at the University of Helsinki. The children learned about researchers and carried out real scientific experiments that illustrated interactions between animals and plants in nature. They gained first-hand experience that science is fun and rewarding.

## MILESTONES OF EQUALITY

From the very beginning, the Finnish welfare state has been based on equality between women and men, and most women of working age have been engaged in paid labour.

Source:  
Mina —  
Centre for  
Gender Equality  
Information





**2** FREEDOM  
TO FOLLOW YOUR OWN ASPIRATIONS

## CEO GUNVOR KRONMAN

While Kronman has always valued diversity, she is a member of a network of experienced women mentoring other mentors through the Global Leadership Fellows Program. This experience has been positive. "Mentoring is an inspiring and cost-effective way to develop personal, professional and organisational and community development programmes for girls, especially those who are underprivileged," she says. *Gunvor Kronman, CEO of the Helsinki-Swedish-Finnish Cultural Centre*

Kronman is a member of the board of directors of many companies and organisations, such as Finnair, the University of Helsinki, the Finnish Broadcasting Company, the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) and Plan Finland. Previously, she served as chairperson of Kepa, the umbrella organisation for Finnish civil society organisations involved in development cooperation. In addition, she has worked in the private, public and third sectors in several African countries. Her areas of specialisation include leadership, strategic planning, mentoring and cross-sectoral networks. She was the 19<sup>th</sup> Finn to be selected to attend leadership training on an Eisenhower Fellowship award in the United States.

*The long tradition of equality in Finland offers opportunities for women and minorities.*

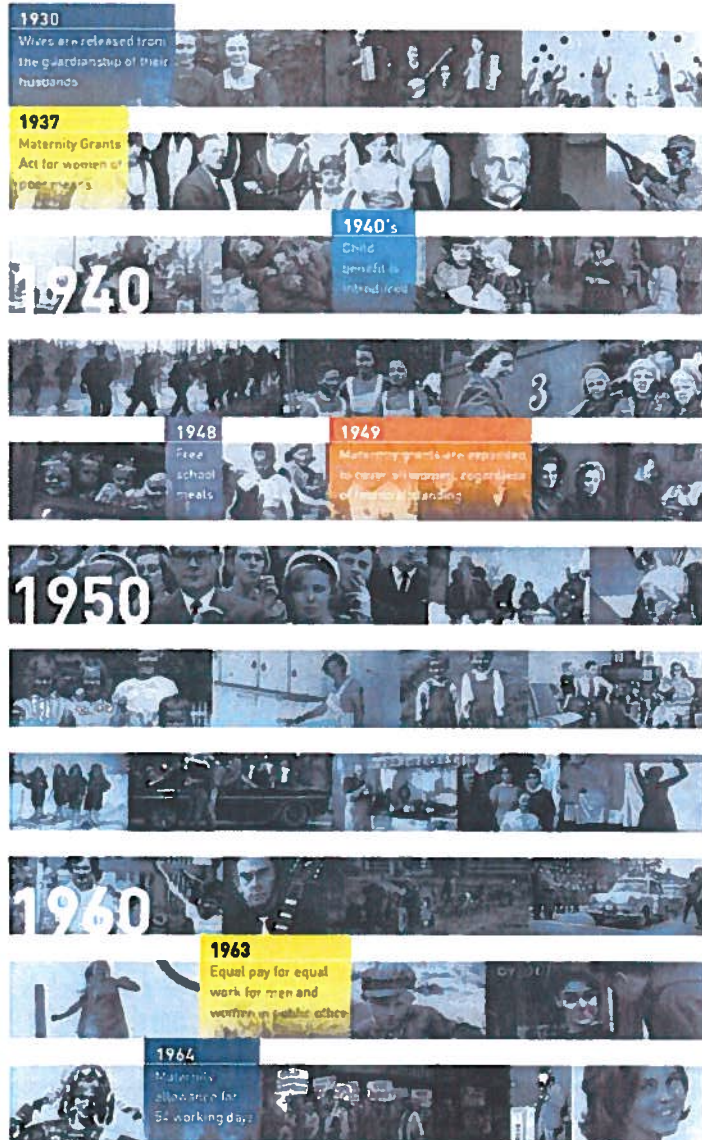
As a member of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland, Kronman is used to living between two cultures.

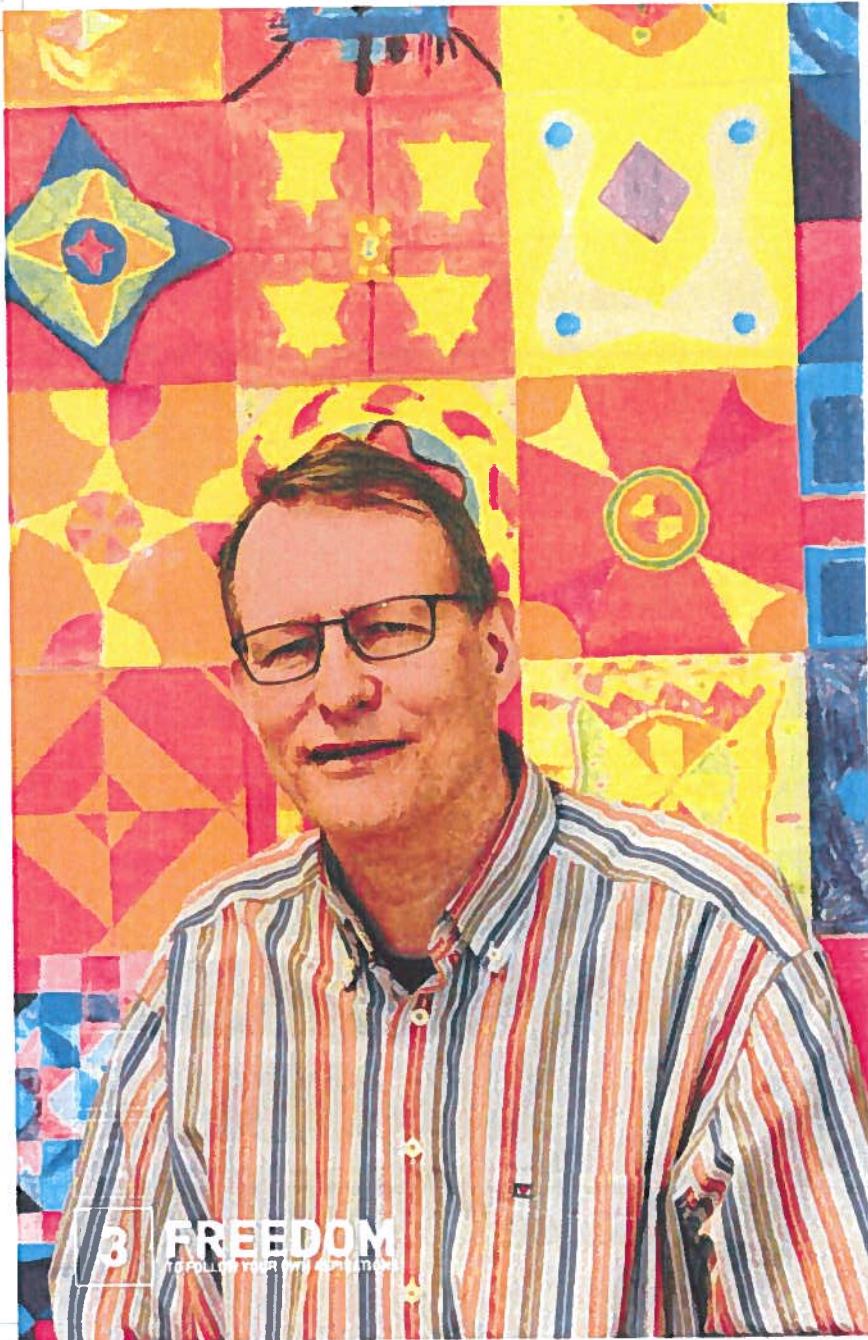
A minority background makes you sensitive to understanding diversity, which is integral to equality. The long tradition of equality in Finland offers opportunities for women and minorities. As a small country, Finland cannot afford to exclude anyone, because the changing age structure of its population will present challenges in the near future," says Kronman.

"I hope that Finland will not become too engrossed in its challenges and isolate itself, because we are dependent on the rest of the world — and vice versa. Global education as a subject in schools would awaken us to the interdependencies in today's world and future needs. The era of easy explanations is over. The world cannot be compressed into one sentence, and one culture is not enough in a country."

Even though women and men have equal career opportunities in Finland, changes take time. For example, the small number of women on corporate boards of directors may be explained by the practice of the boards themselves selecting new members to replace those whose term has come to an end.

*1953 Our programme has become so popular that we are now mentoring men as well.*





## COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL TEACHER KAI-ARI LUNDELL

"Education for girls is one of the main reasons that ways to help a world that is not a society of children. We don't want their children to be educated. The boys the foundation for equality, can't grow through schools," says Kai-Ari Lundell, a comprehensive school teacher.

"Women in Finland have an excellent level of education. A high number of teachers, doctors and lawyers are women. Of particular importance are immigrant girls, who take learning seriously when given the opportunity to attend school," says Lundell, who was selected as Class Teacher of the Year by the Association of Class Teachers in Finland in 2013.

When Kai-Ari was carrying out his military service, his interests ranged from music and written and visual expression to natural sciences. He decided to pursue teacher training. Since then, over three decades, he has taught all age groups in lower comprehensive schools. Alongside his work, he has actively engaged in the prevention of social exclusion among children and young people.

“ Witnessing growth is the best thing about my work.”

3 FREEDOM  
TO FOLLOW YOUR OWN DREAMS

MARY JAVITILE / KUPUNEN/LEHTI

"The global economy is inevitably affecting Finland. Cost-cutting in early childhood education is counterproductive, resulting in expenses later. It would be more cost-effective to prevent problems," says Lundell. Class sizes are increasing, and the number of group lessons, support lessons and special needs classes is decreasing. This burdens teachers, whose work is highly dependent on resources. According to Lundell, we should invest in children aged between five and ten, whose attitudes towards learning, the joy of insight and independent thinking are still in the process of being shaped.

"Finland has good schools of a consistent quality and committed teachers. We strongly believe in equal opportunities for all. It is essential to offer children a broad-based general education and prepare them for lifelong learning, instead of trying to produce top experts in a narrow field. This will enable children to realise their full potential, regardless of their background," says Lundell.

**1970**  
Other organisations beyond the gender equality movement are working for equality.

**1972**  
Comprehensive School Act: all children are entitled to publicly funded basic education.

**1972**  
Council for Gender Equality is established.

**1973**  
Child Day Care Act.

**1974**  
Maternity allowance for a period.

**1975**  
National Pensions Act gives women and men equal rights to basic National pension.

**1975**  
Women can be appointed to military offices.

**1976**  
Separate test assessment of teachers.

**1978**  
Parents receive the right to divide parental leave between them.

**1980's**  
Child home care allowance and special care allowance to compensate for loss of income when attending to a sick child.

**1986**  
Restrictions on appointing women to ecclesiastical offices are lifted.

**1987**  
Act on Equality between Women and Men.

**1990's**  
All children under school age are entitled to day care.

**1990**

**1991**  
Paternity leave and paternity allowance that cannot be transferred to the mother or shared with her are introduced.

**1994**  
Marital rape is criminalised.

**1995**  
Domestic violence becomes subject to public prosecution.

**1995**  
Restrictions on appointing women to military offices are lifted.

**2000**

**2005**  
Parliament Act on Equality between Women and Men.

## NASIMA RAZMYAR I LOVE LIVING AS A FINN IN FINLAND

LENA LARSSON/FINLAND/2012



N.A.A. MILDREDA/2011/FINLAND

Nasima participating as a collector in the Red Cross Hunger Day fundraising event in 2011

“We cannot choose our origin or the colour of our skin, but we should be able to choose our goals.”

*Nasima Razmyar was born in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan in 1982. Her father worked as a diplomat, and the family followed him to Moscow. During the attack in Afghanistan in 2001, she came to live in Finland as a refugee. In Finland, Nasima has pursued her dreams with great determination.*

Nasima started school in Finland at the age of eight. She was nervous about the first day in Finland, children are entitled to lessons in their native language. Nasima did not know any Finnish, and she was afraid that no one would play with her. Her fear turned out to be unfounded, she made new friends immediately. No words were needed — children can communicate in many other ways.

Nasima had always admired her father, and she dreamed about a job in politics. Instead of party games, her father used to organise news quizzes for the children. Nasima and her little brother learned to keep up with international politics. They were interested in events in Afghanistan and Finland, their new home country.

### Passing on the good deeds

Active and outgoing by nature, Nasima engaged in peer support and student association activities when at school. Collaboration, a practical approach to problems and a positive outlook on life have continued to guide her choices.

“The people of Finland helped my family when we needed it the most. I want to pass on their good deeds,” says Nasima.

Her language skills and international background have become valuable resources. In addition to Dari, her native language, Nasima speaks Finnish, Swedish, English and Russian. She soon found herself helping immigrants, women, children and young people through various organisations, where she also held leadership positions. She completed training to serve as a support person for immigrant women who have experienced violence, and took a mental health first-aid course.



organised by the Finnish Central Association for Mental Health. In addition, she studied political science and graduated as a community pedagogue from the HUMAK University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki.

**Finland offered opportunities for success**

Nasima served as project manager for Monika, the Multicultural Women's Association in Finland, in establishing the Multicultural Women's House. In 2010, she was selected as Refugee Woman of the Year for her work to promote equality and diversity, which had also gained national publicity. In the same year, she was elected as a city councillor in Helsinki. In 2011, she was elected as a deputy Member of Parliament and has since worked as a political assistant and communications secretary in the Finnish Parliament. Her dream is to represent Finland in the European Parliament one day.

Nasima would love to represent the country that gave her a home and an opportunity to pursue the education of her choice. As a young woman, it might have been difficult for her to achieve the same elsewhere. She has worked hard to achieve her goals, but her persistence has paid off, as women in Finland have walked the path before her.

Nasima has come to terms with her celebrity, even though she sometimes feels burdened by it.

"I have wanted to give a face to immigrants. We cannot choose our origin or the colour of our skin, but we should be able to choose our goals," she points out.

In her work, Nasima focuses on promoting equality, social justice and employees' and consumers' rights.

The northern conditions in Finland may feel challenging at times, but Nasima cannot imagine anything more beautiful than summers and winters in Finland. She also met the love of her life in Finland — which makes her feel that her life path did not lead to Finland completely by chance.



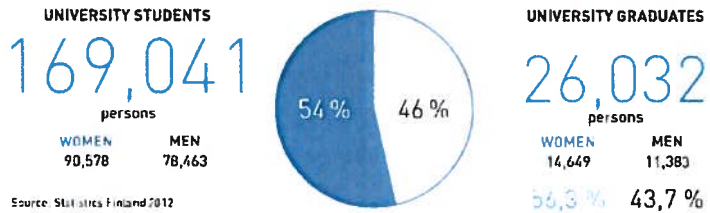
**FINLAND VALUES EDUCATION**

- All children in Finland are entitled to free pre-primary and basic education
- Day care centres and schools provide pre-primary education for six-year-olds
- Children begin comprehensive school at the age of seven. Teaching, educational materials and school meals are free. Transport is free if the child lives more than five kilometres from the school
- After nine years of comprehensive school, young people continue to vocational education or an upper secondary school
- Upper secondary schools provide general education that prepares students for further studies. Upper secondary school can be completed in two to four years. At the end, students take their matriculation examination

According to PISA\* studies, Finland is a leading country in education within the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), particularly in reading and science. This is explained by the following factors:

- Consistently high quality of basic education for the entire age group across the country
- Highly skilled teachers
- Neighbourhood school principle: the school children attend is determined based on their area of residence
- A well-functioning, high-quality library system

\*The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a joint research programme of the OECD countries that provides information on the state and results of education in international comparison. Every three years, the programme assesses mathematics, science and reading skills among 15-year-olds.





Women's Bank is a fund administered by Finn Church Aid, with the aim of ensuring livelihoods and creating sustainable business opportunities for women in developing countries. Pictured here is a Liberian woman in front of her shop

PHOTO: VESLE KIVIMÄKI/FAIRPLAY/REUTERS

Finnish opticians in Kenya: Optician Sanni Niemi checked people's vision in Kenya

REUTERS/ARND BRONKHORST/CONTOUR

Linda Lukus, one of the two founders of the Rail Girls

## WOMEN'S BANK CREATES EQUALITY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

*Women's Bank collects funds to ensure livelihoods and create sustainable business opportunities for women in developing countries. Funding is received through donations and by organising different events,* says **Sirkka-Liisa Roine**, former President and CEO of the Finnish Foundation for Gender Promotion and an active member of Women's Bank

Women's Bank was established when a group of Finnish women, after having visited Liberia, decided to find real and effective ways to promote the status and livelihood of women in developing countries. The strength of the organisation lies in the active participation of volunteers, partners and donors in its local groups in Finland.

"In developing countries, it's practically impossible for poor women to receive a loan for education or starting a business. Banks consider the profit margin to be too low. Women's Bank helps women at grass-roots level, which prevents corrupt civil servants from taking advantage of the women," says Roine.

*The purpose is to empower people and make them less vulnerable.*

The bank has carried out projects promoting women's skills, rights, independent livelihood and sustainable business opportunities in Angola, Guatemala and Haiti, among other countries.

"Sums that seem insignificant to us enable a mother to buy a second and a third pig, and gradually expand her business. When she has meat to sell, she can pay for her children's education and medical care, and perhaps even renovate her home," says Roine.

This type of support particularly benefits women who are the sole providers for their family. In addition, sustainable support helps entire villages, and their increased income improves the national economy. A single Christmas sale in Finland can generate as much as EUR 18,000 for Women's Bank, which translates into vocational education for 610 women in developing countries. This enables the women to exercise their right to satisfy their basic needs, manage their lives and act as full members of their community and society.

WOMEN'S BANK IS BASED ON PRACTICAL, HUMAN-FOCUSED VALUES:

- **Inventiveness and persistence help women cope with adversity**
- **Joy encourages them not to give up**
- **Mutual respect and a feeling of belonging help them carry on**
- **Hope becomes real through acts**
- **Transparency creates trust**

Finnish women embrace these values, having applied them and proven their power during difficult times in the history of their own country.

Source:  
Kauppa-lehti 12 December 2013

More information  
[www.naistenpankki.fi](http://www.naistenpankki.fi)

## THE RAILS GIRLS MOVEMENT TEACHES SOFTWARE CRAFTSMANSHIP TO WOMEN

The Rails Girls movement evolved from a single event in Helsinki. The name comes from an open source web application framework called Ruby on Rails. The founders, Linda Luukas and Katri Suominen, said it was an attempt to give young women a friendly introduction to software skills.

It all started in October 2010 as a free workshop to encourage women to learn about building web applications and software.

“Actually I wanted to learn how to code in a supportive environment myself,” says Linda Luukas. “The workshop sets girls on a path, from online consumers to web creators, by teaching the first steps in understanding the languages and layouts of the web,” she goes on to explain.

Now Rails Girls has spread around the world, from Beijing to Paris, Lisbon and Kiev. Guides for local organizers are available in a variety of languages. At the workshops, participants learn from volunteers who talk about designing apps and the social culture around software development. Also, female programmers describe their careers and technical jargon is put into context with an introduction to programming. Before the two-day workshop is over, all participants code and implement a simple web app.

“Rails Girls applies an open-sourced, nonprofit model which enables us to spread quickly,” says Luukas. “The backbone of the whole web was built in Finland with open-source technologies, so it made total sense to share with everyone.”

BY THE GARRISON

[www.railsgirls.com](http://www.railsgirls.com)

## CAN EQUALITY BE MEASURED?

Promoting equality  
requires determination

In 2012, the Pew Research Center report found that the global gender gap had decreased slightly, by just 0.2 percentage points, over the past decade.

“Women’s involvement in political decision-making is the lowest of all 144 countries,” says Saadia Zahedi, senior research advisor, promoting the Global Gender Gap Report 2012.

In the report, WEF divided nations into categories based on women’s access to health care and education, as well as political and financial decision-making. In 2013, Iceland was the global leader in gender equality, followed by Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Gender equality in Finland is a result of determined and systematic work over the long term.

Women in Finland have participated in political decision-making for more than a century. Equality between women and men in Finland is not a matter of chance, but the result of the persistent work carried out by active, appreciated and well-educated women. Today, women wield increasing influence in politics, which is evident in various creative and courageous initiatives, launched by newcomers in particular.

A high proportion of women ensures more equal decision-making, even though gender is not the only factor in play. Competence is key in parliamentary work, and in a modern information society in general. Finland has good reason to be proud of its highly competent women, whose achievements are internationally renowned.

The parliamentary group of the Finnish Women’s Union in 1907.



PHOTOGRAPH BY GUY LAWRENCE / GETTY IMAGES

EQUALITY IN FINLAND! FACTS

## TOP RANKINGS FOR FINLAND BY SEVERAL INDICATORS

### The best place in the world to be a mother

[State of the World's Mothers 2013, Save the Children](#)

The report ranks 177 countries based on how well they have succeeded in supporting mothers.

### Second best in human capital

[World Economic Forum 2013](#)

Finland is ranked as second in the world in human capital based on education, well-being, employability and other similar indicators.

### The fifth best place in the world to be a woman

[Women's 2013](#)

The criteria included justice, health, education, economics and politics.

### The least failed country in the world

[The Global Competitiveness Index 2011, World Economic Forum](#)

The index includes 178 nations, with Finland being the most stable and the least vulnerable to collapse or conflict.

### One of the happiest nations in the world

[World Happiness Report 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, Institute for Economics and Statistics](#)

Ranking: 2. and 7.



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