



Nordic Council  
of Ministers

POLICY BRIEF

# **A review of the Nordic implementation of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan**

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# 1 Introduction and scope

COP25 (Madrid 2019), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Parties adopted the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) and its Gender Action Plan.<sup>[1]</sup> Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden thereby committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of gender-responsive climate action and mainstreaming gender equality into the implementation of the Paris Agreement.<sup>[2]</sup> As the culmination of the Enhanced LWPG at COP29 in 2024 approaches, an opportunity arises for countries to evaluate their progress and exchange experiences.

Thus, this policy brief compiles the main findings from the report "A review of the Nordic implementation of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan" (2024). The review assesses the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's Gender Action Plan (UNFCCC GAP) in the five Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. It assesses both the notable endeavours towards gender responsive climate policies through the strategy of gender mainstreaming, as well as the challenges encountered.

At the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) in 2022, the Nordic Ministers for Gender Equality made a commitment to promote international cooperation, alliance, and advocacy on the interconnections between climate action and gender equality, as well as strengthening the work to gender mainstream climate policy in a structured way.<sup>[3]</sup> The review has been commissioned by the Nordic Working Group for Climate and Air under the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The UNFCCC GAP is structured into five priority areas; 'A: Capacity-building, knowledge management and communication', 'B: Gender balance, participation and women's leadership', 'C: Coherence', 'D: Gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation' and 'E: Monitoring and reporting.'

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1. UNFCCC (2020). Enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan. Decision 3/CP.25.  
2. UNFCCC (2023). Gender Action Plan - Decision 3/CP.25 and amendments agreed in Decisions 24/CP.27 and 15/CP.28  
3. Nordic Council of Ministers (2022). Commitment by the Nordic Council of Ministers under Generation Equality's Action Coalition: Feminist Action for Climate Justice.

To assess the Nordic implementation of the UNFCCC GAP, the activities under each Priority area have been translated into the Nordic context of the national (and regional and local) level of implementation, with a specific focus on domestic climate policies- and strategies.

The review draws on desk studies, screenings of relevant policy- documents and reports, as well as the involvement of policymakers and gender- and climate experts via interviews, e-mail questionnaires and online focus groups. The focus groups (5 in total) were conducted in break-out rooms in an online cross-Nordic workshop in December 2023. Representatives from all five countries have participated in the project steering group led by Nordic Working Group for Climate and Air under the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), sharing inputs for the review through contributing with contacts, relevant documents, and feedback. Several of the steering group members also participated in the focus groups.

The review has been commissioned by the Nordic Working Group for Climate and Air under NCM. It has been carried out in the autumn and winter of 2023/2024 by Norion Consult, Ekvalita, Ráður, Chalmers University, CICERO, and Equality Research Helsinki.

The results from the assessment of each of the priority areas are outlined under "main findings". Moreover, the project has compiled gaps and barriers to successful mainstreaming in climate policies in the Nordic countries, as well as best practices on local, regional, and national level, which are presented at the end of this policy brief. First, we present policy recommendations, derived from the project, which aim to support implementation of the UNFCCC GAP in climate policies in the Nordic countries.

# 2 Recommendations

The following recommendations aim at advancing the development and implementation of gender-responsive climate policy in the Nordic countries. The recommendations are divided into the governmental levels of the Nordic cooperation, the national governments, and the municipal and local governments, respectively.

## The Nordic Co-operation

- **Develop indicators and targets** aligned with UNFCCC Gender Action Plan for each of the focus areas outlined in the Commitment by the Nordic Council of Ministers under Generation Equality's Action Coalition: Feminist Action for Climate Justice and follow up by regularly evaluating the implementation process in the Nordic region.
- **Establish a mechanism for regular collection of resources and best practices** from Nordic countries, for instance every two years, demonstrating or supporting the implementation of the UNFCCC GAP. Translate existing relevant guides, tools, and other resources presented in this review from local languages to other Nordic languages and/or English for broader accessibility. These resources may be made available on the recently launched Knowledge Hub on Gender Equality and Green Transition, which, moreover, should be broadly promoted among stakeholders and policymakers at all levels across the Nordic countries.
- **Facilitate high-level cross-Nordic events, conferences, roundtables etc.** with relevant Nordic ministers within both climate- and gender equality agendas to bring attention to the commitment and relevance of gender mainstreaming in climate policy- and action, and to discuss the Nordic experiences, efforts, challenges, and best practices in implementing the UNFCCC GAP.

- **Commission projects aimed at**
  - **collecting and analysing Nordic case examples** demonstrating how gender mainstreaming efforts within the green transition supports the efficiency in reaching climate goals, and develop a case catalogue that showcases “the business case” on gender mainstreaming in climate policy through data and inspiring examples.
  - **investigating and documenting the consequences of climate change and resilience** from an intersectional gender perspective within the Nordic region.
- **Integrate gender equality considerations into the application process for commissioned projects** within the field of climate policy and green transition by setting up requirements for gender-responsive initiatives related to e.g. project team, project activities or objectives, as well as impact assessments and evaluations.

## National governmental level

- **Develop national strategies for implementing the UNFCCC GAP**, i.e. for gender mainstreaming the implementation of the Paris Agreement, including the translation and formulation of activities, targets, and indicators within each of the five priority areas of the GAP. The strategy should include:
  - Clear allocation of responsibilities and resources for implementation
  - Guidelines to integrate gender equality into climate policy documents, such as individual sections in UNFCCC submissions and National Climate Action Plans. This involves systematically specifying how gender equality is embedded in the concept of ‘just transition’ in both a domestic and international climate policy context.
  - Activities aimed at fostering more gender balance within STEM education and professions.
  - Measures to enhance accountability, transparency, and monitoring of gender mainstreaming in climate policy.
- **Establish inter-ministerial working groups and appoint coordinators** with high-level support and allocated resources (time and budget) for their work of gender mainstreaming in climate policy, specifically implementing

the UNFCCC GAP in a national context, i.e., in both domestic and international climate policy contexts.

- **Ensure systematic and inclusive involvement and collaboration with external gender experts**, including both inter-governmental- and non-governmental experts such as the Gender Equality Department and NGO's, researchers, etc. in all phases of implementing the UNFCCC GAP, from knowledge building, to conducting analyses and assessments, to monitoring.
- **Facilitate knowledge sharing events, e.g. conferences, to engage relevant stakeholders**, including those who can share knowledge and best practices, such as researchers, organisations, or regional, municipal, or other Nordic policymakers. Topics could include the relevance of integrating gender equality into domestic climate policy through concrete measures taken in Iceland, Sweden, or Finland.

The recommendations presented in the next section targeted regional and local levels, is largely also relevant and important to consider at a national governance level.

## Regional and local levels

- **Allocate time and resources to gather and utilise existing data** in gender analysis and/or gender impact assessments within specific, delineated areas of climate policy, such as for instance infrastructural planning, to identify gender-specific concerns or impacts. To know more about gender analyses, see chapter 3.1 and 4.1.5.
- **Integrate gender equality indicators and targets into existing frameworks** and networks focused on regional and municipal commitments and reporting on implementing the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030. Examples include Viable Cities (NO), DK2020 (DK), Nordic Transition Partnership for Climate Neutral Cities 2030 (NTP), C40 (global) or the Smart City program.
- **Enhance knowledge sharing across regions and municipalities** within and across the Nordic countries, for instance through networks like those mentioned above.
- **Provide training programmes, courses and/or workshops for staff** to enhance their level of knowledge and competences in gender mainstreaming in the green transition on regional and/or municipal level.

# 3 Main findings: implementing the UNFCCC GAP in the nordic countries

## Priority area A:

### 3.1 Capacity-building, knowledge management and communication

This section provides an overview of current initiatives under Priority area A in the UNFCCC GAP, related to capacity-building, knowledge management and communication. Strengthening capacity building, knowledge management, and communication deepens the awareness of the interplay between gender equality and climate issues and serves as a prerequisite for increasing the integration of gender equality into climate work.

- The review shows that there is variation in the knowledge of the UNFCCC GAP and the interlinkages between climate and gender among governmental stakeholders informing the review across the Nordic countries. This also goes for regional and municipal stakeholders.
- Knowledge-strengthening initiatives exist in different capacities in the Nordic countries, carried out by ministries, governmental agencies and/or UNFCCC national gender and climate change focal points (NGCCFP), respectively. In Finland, Iceland and Sweden, there are several trainings, tools and knowledge-strengthening activities promoting gender mainstreaming in climate policies, available for policy makers, practitioners, and the industry.
- The review observes limited knowledge and an under-prioritisation of gender mainstreaming in domestic climate policies, especially in Denmark and Norway.
- Many stakeholders informing this review consider the absence of sex-disaggregated data and knowledge of the intersection of climate and gender a barrier to gender mainstreaming in climate policies. However, this review suggests that this is a misunderstood barrier. Rather, the review suggests that the existing sex-disaggregated data and evidence base in the Nordics is



in many cases substantial enough to serve as a basis for initiating gender analyses. The existing data sources for example include insights into behaviour and attitudes regarding climate change and sustainability, transport patterns, food consumption, gender balance in sectors crucial to the green transition, as well as the gender composition in relevant ministries. [4] Rather, this review indicates that existing sex-disaggregated data on the gendered impacts of climate policies are rarely analysed and communicated.

- The review shows that various aspects of climate efforts – mitigation, adaptation, and resilience – are given varying degrees of attention, where mitigation is most often considered in climate policies.
- In relation to the UNFCCC GAP's encouragement to effectively communicate to the public the efforts to promote gender equality in climate work and policy, a range of collaborative efforts in the Nordic region can be highlighted. Specifically, the recently launched online platform The Nordic Knowledge Hub, developed by the Nordic Co-operation, stands out as a key initiative in terms of enhancing the knowledge base, by gathering existing relevant resources and recent publications supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers.<sup>[5]</sup>

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4. Lander Svendsen, N., Weber, K., et al. (2022). How climate policies impact gender and vice versa in the Nordic countries

5. Nordic Knowledge Hub (n.d.). A Green and Gender Equal Nordic Region - How it works in practice.

## Priority area B:

### 3.2 Gender balance, participation and women's leadership

The chapter on Priority area B of the UNFCCC GAP delves into the efforts to enhance gender balance, women's participation, and leadership within climate policy, including consultation with Indigenous Peoples, specifically women.

- The gender quota of the Nordic female delegates to the COP28 ranges from 49–67%, which is an overall increase since COP21 when the Paris Agreement was signed.<sup>[6]</sup> All five Nordic countries work actively towards enhancing the gender balance in Party delegations, and Norway, Iceland, and Denmark have gender quotas or mandatory gender equality reporting in relation to boards.<sup>[7]</sup>
- Men in the Nordic countries, as well as globally, make up the majority in STEM education and consequently dominate the sectors of the new green economy – energy, transport, agriculture, and construction.<sup>[8]</sup> This means that the new solutions, jobs, and investments demanded by the transition to a low-carbon society risk favouring men, missing out on the vital perspectives and competencies of women, as well as relevant non-STEM qualifications in general. All Nordic countries acknowledge the challenges with the gender imbalance in the STEM fields, and the review has identified various Nordic initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in STEM education and green jobs.<sup>[9]</sup>
- In continuation of this, the chapter discusses the need to value both technical and social dimensions of the green transition, including the care economy, and the potential consequences of neglecting care aspects in climate policies. While solutions addressing the gender imbalance of the STEM field is paramount, researchers also emphasise the importance of including non-STEM perspectives into climate work, e.g. the social sector and unpaid domestic work and care. While the importance of such inclusivity has been recognised at events like COP27 and COP28, there is a gap in concrete strategies to fully realise this approach.
- Finland, Norway and Sweden have in various ways emphasized the importance of involvement and consultation of the Sámi people on matters concerning them. By appointing the Sámi Climate Change Council in Finland,<sup>[10]</sup> the Finnish government has been taking a step further in establishing a forum specifically dealing with the effects of climate change on Sámi people and their livelihoods and cultural practices.

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6. Gender Climate Tracker (n.d.). Women's participation in party delegations.

7. Gender Climate Tracker (n.d.). Women's participation in party delegations.

8. Danbolt, I. (2023) Bridging the Green Jobs Divide: Nordic gender barriers and opportunities in the spotlight

9. Lander Svendsen, N., Weber, K. et al (2022). How climate policies impact gender and vice versa in a Nordic context

10. Finnish Ministry of the Environment (2023). Government appointed Sámi Climate Council.

## Priority area C:

### 3.3 Coherence

Priority Area C involves translating international policies into national governance and ensuring coherent gender mainstreaming across different offices and levels, specifically in relation to the UNFCCC GAP. Strong coherence is a result of political will and is central in ensuring impactful gender mainstreaming in climate policy. This review finds that the Nordic countries exhibit diverse approaches to gender mainstreaming within their national policy and legislative frameworks on climate.

- **Denmark's** gender equality efforts are coordinated and supported by the Ministry of Digital Government and Gender Equality, particularly its Department of Gender Equality. The Gender Equality Act mandates public authorities to promote gender equality systematically across planning and administration. By law, the Danish Government must present an annual National Perspective and Action Plan for Gender Equality to the Danish parliament. The current Gender Action Plan from 2023 does not comprise a specific focus or measures on gender equality in climate policies and green transition.<sup>[11]</sup> All new legislative proposals in Denmark must undergo a relevance testing to conclude whether a Gender impact assessment (GIA) is relevant. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has gender focal points in all development corporation departments within the Ministry, including in the Department of Green Diplomacy and Climate. The Danish national gender and climate change focal point (NGCCFP) is placed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- In **Finland**, the Gender Equality Unit, operating within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, supports and promotes gender mainstreaming in governmental decision-making process. Finland also employs an inter-departmental coordination structure, with gender mainstreaming working groups in every ministry. The Act on Equality between Women and Men requires authorities to promote gender equality actively, leading to the inclusion of gender perspectives in budget drafts and legislative reforms. The current gender action plan (2020–2023) includes climate change as one of six priority areas where gender equality shall be included, demonstrating political will and support for gender mainstreaming in climate policy.<sup>[12]</sup> The NGCCFP is placed in the Ministry of the Environment.

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11. Danish Parliament. Committee on Equality (2023). National Perspective and Action Plan for Gender Equality 2023.

12. Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (2021). Making Finland a global leader in gender equality Government action plan for gender equality 2020–2023.

- In **Iceland**, the Directorate of Equality, under the Prime Minister's Office, handles administration of all matters regarding (gender) equality. Gender mainstreaming in policymaking draws on the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender. Gender budgeting is a mandatory practice, integrated into decision-making processes and daily operations, structured around five-year plans to ensure gender considerations in strategic planning and budget proposals. Iceland has established gender equality officers in all ministries. These representatives are tasked with overseeing gender equality activities within their respective ministry's scope and ensuring gender mainstreaming in policymaking and decision-making. In the Proposal for the Parliament Resolution on Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2020–2023, gender equality integration in climate- and environmental policy and projects is explicitly addressed.<sup>[13]</sup> The NGCCFP is placed in the Department of Land and Natural Heritage, at the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources.
- In **Norway**, the Ministry of Culture and Equality in Norway is responsible for coordinating gender equality efforts. The Norwegian government presents an annual policy report for the Parliament on the status of the work of promoting equality and diversity in all sectors. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act mandates public authorities to engage actively in the promotion and reporting of equality. Prior to decisions regarding state measures with effects beyond internal operations, such as reforms, rule changes and investments, policy makers are required to consider e.g. what effects the decisions have on certain groups of people. The requirements are formulated in Instruction for Official Studies of Central Governmental Measures.<sup>[14]</sup> The NGCCFP is placed in the Ministry of Climate and Environment.
- In **Sweden**, the Division for Gender Equality, under the Ministry of Employment, is responsible for overseeing gender equality policy and oversee gender mainstreaming processes. Gender mainstreaming is the Swedish Government's overarching strategy to implement the national objectives on gender equality. The Swedish gender equality policy has sub-goals, and all gender mainstreaming actions are guided by the objectives set out in the policy, as well as of policy specific objectives that have been formulated based on the gender needs assessment of each Ministry. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency oversees two development programs focused on gender mainstreaming in government agencies and Swedish higher education (GMGA+).<sup>[15]</sup> The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency is also part of this program, committed to assessing gender mainstreaming in climate and environment policies. The Swedish government has shown commitment in

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13. Icelandic Government (2019). The Prime Minister's Proposal for a Parliamentary Resolution on the Gender Equality Action Programme 2020–2023

14. Norwegian Government (n.d.). The investigation instruction

15. Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2020.) Gender mainstreaming in government agencies

implementing the UNFCCC GAP, by commissioning the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency to formulate a strategy for the national implementation.<sup>[16]</sup> The strategy is developed in cooperation with the Swedish Gender Equality Agency and offers a translation of the UNFCCC GAP priority areas into a Swedish national governance context. The NGCCFPs are placed in the Swedish Gender Equality Agency and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, respectively.

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16. Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (2021). Draft strategy – considering and integrating gender equality aspects at Sweden's implementation of The Paris Agreement.

## Priority area D:

### 3.4 Gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation

This section describes how the countries have gender mainstreamed in their climate policy frameworks, highlighting the application of gender impact assessments, the practice of gender budgeting and the involvement of gender experts. The assessed climate policy frameworks comprise selected policy documents, including national climate action plans, long-term low-emission strategies, and other climate policy documents that were brought to the attention of the reviewers.

- In **Denmark**, in accordance with the legislation, the Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities has carried out relevance testing of all 71 legislative proposals put forward in the period 2005/2006 to 2022/2023.<sup>[17]</sup> 2 out of 71 bills underwent a gender impact assessment (GIA). Several ministries, including the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Environment, have not performed any GIAs since 2016/2017. The relevance testing of the current Danish Climate Law did not lead to a gender impact assessment, and the plan does not comprise gender-responsive measures.<sup>[18]</sup> The Danish Climate Action Plan of 2020, which has not been subject to a GIA either, does not directly address gender issues but focuses on ensuring social balance during the green transition, aiming to protect livelihoods and prevent increased inequality, without including specific indicators for gender equality.<sup>[19]</sup> Conversely, Denmark's 2020 long-term low-emission strategy explicitly links climate adaptation to gender equality, recognising that efforts toward a green transition can support achieving gender equality (SDG 5).<sup>[20]</sup> It advocates for investments in women's empowerment, such as education and health, as beneficial for broader climate goals. In their national 'Beijing +25' review report, Denmark demonstrate that they have integrated gender perspectives into disaster risk reduction, climate resilience, and mitigation policies, with a focus on supporting women's participation and leadership, particularly those affected by disasters, and on strengthening the evidence base and awareness about the unique vulnerabilities of women and girls to environmental impacts.<sup>[21]</sup>

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17. Danish Ministry of Digital Government and Gender Equality (2023) Notification to the Danish Parliament's Gender Equality Committee regarding the gender equality assessment of legislative proposal 2022/23; KVINFO (2023). Equality assessment of legislative proposals

18. Danish Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities (2000). Notice of the Climate

19. Danish Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities (2020). Climate Action plan 2020.

20. Danish Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities (2020). Climate Programme 2020, Denmark's Mid-century, Long-term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission Development Strategy

21. Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2019). Comprehensive national review report Beijing+25: Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

- In **Finland**, a GIA was conducted on the Finnish Climate and Energy Strategy in 2021, revealing that proposed policy measures would impact male-dominated sectors positively but negatively affect female-dominated fields within the services sector.<sup>[22]</sup> Finland's Climate Action Plan of 2017 was also subject to a GIA.<sup>[23]</sup> Recognising the gender-segregated labour market, the plan acknowledges the potential varying impacts of climate measures on different sectors and highlights gender differences in political participation, consumption patterns, and responses to climate change, such as mobility practices and eating habits. The plan emphasises the importance of considering these gendered differences in climate policy design and implementation, which makes the plan gender responsive. Conversely, Finland's 2020 long-term low-emission strategy does not explicitly address gender aspects.<sup>[24]</sup> Although it mentions the government's responsibility to align climate action with human rights and efforts to reduce inequality, detailed actions or policies targeting gender equality are absent. As stated in their national 'Beijing +25' review report, Finland's actions to integrate gender perspectives into environmental policies and programs have focused on supporting women's participation in environmental management, raising awareness about gender-specific environmental hazards, promoting education in STEM fields related to the environment, ensuring women's equal opportunities in the green economy, and monitoring the impact of environmental policies on women and girls.<sup>[25]</sup>
- In **Iceland**, the government's five-year plan on gender budgeting specifically mentions the importance of integrating gender perspectives in environmental, transportation, and rural development policies.<sup>[26]</sup> The City of Reykjavik has implemented gender budgeting across all departments, and a GIA was conducted on the city's 2021 Climate Strategy. In the 2022 status report mapping gendered aspects of every Icelandic department of government ministries, the relation between environmental and equality issues is highly emphasised, and it is stated that positive outcomes in one category benefit the other.<sup>[27]</sup> In 2022, a GIA of Iceland's Climate Action Plan, particularly focusing on mobility, revealed differences in how men and women use bike lanes and walking paths, influenced by income levels.<sup>[28]</sup> The Climate Action Plan of 2021 emphasises the importance of ensuring that climate change actions are socially just and aligned with the SDGs, with a

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22. Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2022). Carbon Neutral Finland 2035 – National Climate and Energy Strategy; Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2021). Gender Impact Assessment of the Finnish Climate and Energy Strategy

23. Finnish Ministry of the Environment (2017). Government Report on Medium-term Climate Change Policy Plan for 2030 Towards Climate-Smart Day-to-Day Living

24. Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2020). Finland's long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategy

25. Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2019). Comprehensive national-level review: Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).

26. Reykjavik city (n.d.). GB analysis of city services.

27. Icelandic Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance and Economy (2022). Mapping gender perspectives Status Report 2022

28. University of Iceland (2022), C22:01 Impact of climate action Cost and benefit assessment

specific focus on equality across various societal groups, including gender, income, and sector.<sup>[29]</sup> The 2021 long-term low-emission strategy in Iceland does not specifically mention gender aspects, focusing more on the impacts of climate action on different income groups and the need for a just transition.<sup>[30]</sup> Iceland's 'Beijing +25' review report emphasises Iceland's policies and legislative frameworks supporting gender equality, alongside its efforts in international cooperation and national implementation of gender-focused actions. Climate is not directly mentioned within the report aside from a section on the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and in the list of 'Civil Society Initiatives' including several climate-related projects.<sup>[31]</sup>

- In **Norway**, the Ministry of Climate and Environment is in the initial phase of launching an investigation aimed at enhancing the understanding of the distributional effects of climate policy, including its impact on gender. In the White Paper 26 (2022–2023), *Climate in Change – Together for a Climate-Resilient Society*, the Norwegian government states its intention to acquire more knowledge on how climate changes and climate adaptation can affect gender equality across various sectors in Norway. This will be done, among other things, in connection with the work on a national climate vulnerability analysis, where the gender equality perspective is one of several cross-cutting themes that will be explored. In this review, no GIA of domestic climate policies were found. Norway's Climate Action Plan of 2020 addresses the SDGs, including SDG 5 on gender equality, emphasising that climate action should be balanced with other SDGs and not negatively affect low-income or vulnerable groups or employment.<sup>[32]</sup> Norway's long-term low-emission strategy of 2020 does not specifically include gender aspects.<sup>[33]</sup> Norway's Eighth National Communication to the UNFCCC for 2022 mentions gender once in relation to "just transition" but contains no specific gender-responsive measures. In their "Beijing +25" review report, Norway highlights its active role in promoting gender concerns in international climate negotiations, especially in adaptation to climate change. Emphasis is placed on the importance of involving women in climate action due to their vulnerability to climate impacts. Additionally, initiatives to promote equality in farming are detailed, with specific measures to support women farmers and those involved in reindeer herding.<sup>[34]</sup>

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29. Icelandic Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources (2020). Climate Action Plan

30. Icelandic Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources (2021). On the Path to Climate Neutrality - Iceland's Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy

31. Icelandic Government, Prime Minister's Office (2019). Iceland's report on Beijing +25: Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).

32. Norwegian Government (2020). Climate Action Plan 2021–2030

33. Norwegian Government (2020). Norway's long-term low-emission strategy for 2050

34. Norwegian Ministry of Culture (2019). Beijing +25: The situation of women and girls in Norway: Development, progress and measures 2014–2019.



- **Sweden's** draft strategy for gender mainstreaming the Paris Agreement emphasises integrating gender equality into all budget areas, including climate. However, this review at hand did not identify concrete examples of gender budgeting in climate policy. Sweden's Climate Action Plans of 2019 and 2023 emphasise the importance of efforts towards climate neutrality not compromising other SDGs.<sup>[35]</sup> The 2023 plan notably integrates gender equality into climate efforts, and acknowledges the mutual reinforcement between gender equality and climate action. It specifies the importance of a gender equality perspective in areas such as public transport, the labor market, and STEM fields. The plan was prepared with a gender analysis. The Swedish long-term low-emission strategy of 2020 outlines proposals for integrating gender equality into the implementation of the Paris Agreement and acknowledges the importance of considering distributional and regional effects of the green transition on gender equality. Sweden's Integrated Energy and Climate Plan, submitted to the EU in 2020,<sup>[36]</sup> includes a dedicated section on gender mainstreaming, reflecting the country's long-standing commitment to gender equality. In their "Beijing +25 report", Sweden emphasises the inclusion of gender concerns in international climate negotiations, notably through its support for the Gender Action Plan at COP23 and promoting women's influence in climate change decisions at COP24. Furthermore, Sweden has sought to integrate gender equality in climate and environmental work on an international scale, evidenced by its influence during its chairmanship of the Nordic Environment Finance Cooperation (NEFCO) and its support for the Climate & Clean Air Coalition (CCAC).<sup>[37]</sup>

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35. Swedish Government (2019). A unified policy for the climate - climate policy action plan; Swedish Government (2023). The government's climate action plan – all the way to net zero

36. Swedish Ministry of Infrastructure (2020). Sweden's Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan

37. Government Offices of Sweden, Ministry of Employment, Division for Gender Equality (2019). *Sweden's report on Beijing +25*.

## Priority area E:

### 3.5 Monitoring and reporting

Priority area E focuses on enhancing the mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on gender mainstreaming within climate-related initiatives. It emphasises the development of clear procedures for data collection, analysis, and monitoring to improve accountability and fulfil both national and international reporting obligations. This approach is also seen as a way to facilitate knowledge and experience exchange among countries, aiming to increase transparency, accountability, and the effectiveness of gender-responsive climate policies.

The Nordic countries have implemented diverse strategies for monitoring and evaluating gender mainstreaming in addition to adhering to the UNFCCC reporting requirements set for 2024.

- The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) reviews the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) every fifth year. The most recent reports from 2019 marked the 25th anniversary of the BPfA (Beijing+25), during which member states were invited to review their progress and submit national review reports. The review reports (2019) consist of 40 questions through which the countries must report on their progress in enhancing gender equality. Two questions relate directly to environmental- and climate policies, namely what actions the countries have taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation. The contents of the five national reports are included in section 3.1.5 on Priority area D. UNFCCC GAP and its priority areas and activities are not explicitly referred to in the 40 questions on which the Parties must report. Nonetheless, the national review reports can be considered one example of an international monitoring- and reporting mechanism of gender mainstreaming in climate policies. Besides these, the review has identified the following national monitoring- and reporting mechanisms more or less related to gender mainstreaming in climate policies:
- **Denmark** employs the Act on Gender Equality to mandate public authorities to integrate gender equality into their operations, including legislative assessments and setting gender balance targets with a three-year reporting cycle. Public institutions report their gender equality efforts every third year, with recent reports indicating varying degrees of goal setting and incorporating a gender equality perspective in their operations. The review finds no monitoring efforts related to

- **Finland** has mandatory gender equality plans that require periodic evaluations, supported by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. The Gender Equality Unit and the Ombudsman for Equality oversee these efforts. The new Climate Act highlights the significance of climate policy monitoring, suggesting a structured approach to gender mainstreaming monitoring.
- **Iceland** employs mandatory gender budgeting, supervised by the Directorate of Equality. The gender budgeting process involves a comprehensive monitoring framework. This approach includes annual progress reports on gender equality goals and integrates gender considerations into climate work.
- In **Norway**, this review finds no specific processes for monitoring, reporting, and accounting beyond UNFCCC submissions. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act outlines responsibilities for conducting regular equality assessments, with support from various governmental bodies.
- **Sweden** has established a comprehensive network for gender mainstreaming oversight across sectors, including climate policy. The Swedish Gender Equality Agency and the GMGA-network are central to these efforts. The Environmental Protection Agency's gender mainstreaming strategy highlights a need for more effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

# 4 Gaps and Barriers

The following sections present identified gaps and barriers challenging the implementation of the UNFCCC GAP across the Nordic countries. To maintain consistency with the UNFCCC GAP's framework, the identified gaps and barriers have been categorised in accordance with the five priority areas. However, these gaps and barriers are not isolated to the distinct priority areas. Rather, they are interlinked, reflecting the complexity of the issues involved. Additionally, the national approaches and progress levels in implementing the UNFCCC GAP vary across the Nordic countries, which means that the significance, relevance and applicability of the identified gaps and barriers vary for each nation.

## Domestic under-prioritisation

While the Nordic region is a frontrunner in both gender equality and climate policies, policymakers risk overlooking the relevance of integrating gender perspectives into domestic climate policy. This is particularly notable in Denmark and Norway. Across all five countries, interviewed stakeholders express that the specific priority of focusing on gender in climate policy and action often comes across as limited, pointing to space for improvement in terms of both integrating gender equality in climate policy and communicating on the gender mainstreaming efforts made.

Another barrier in this regard is that the policy areas of both gender and climate policy are politicised domains within the five Nordic countries – not in terms of whether gender equality and green, just transition is imperative, but in terms of what measures are needed to promote and realising it.

## Inadequate utilisation of data and lack of gender analyses

Insufficient utilisation of data poses a barrier to demonstrating the importance and relevance of gender mainstreaming in climate policies to policymakers, including conducting gender analyses. While the argument of "lack of data" is encountered in this review, the actual barrier seems to be the underutilisation of existing data, and thereby also a lack of resources allocated for looking into,

gathering, and applying existing data. The underutilisation of data stems from inadequacies in political prioritisation, resource allocation, knowledge dissemination and communication, resulting in a lack of awareness.

## **Lack of gender mainstreaming tools and training for climate policymaking**

Although tools and training for gender mainstreaming are accessible to public authorities and policymakers in certain countries, there is a noticeable scarcity – or lack - of resources specifically tailored for the gender mainstreaming in climate policies. Regarding domestic climate policy, this obstacle is perpetuated by the fact that the concept of gender mainstreaming has traditionally been performed in the realm of international development policy and programming. Thus, this review finds that gender mainstreaming in the field of climate policy – especially domestic climate policy – needs more support in terms of both political will, knowledge dissemination, guiding resources and training.

## **Differences in gender mainstreaming terminology can challenge cross-Nordic dialogue**

This review reveals significant inconsistencies in gender mainstreaming terminology and concepts across the Nordic countries, with each nation adopting different terms and interpretations, for instance, in the concepts of gender impact assessments and gender analysis. If the gender mainstreaming concepts are clearly defined and communicated within the countries, these discrepancies do not necessarily affect internal efforts within each country. However, they can challenge communication and exchange across the Nordic countries as well as cross-Nordic evaluations and reviews, as for instance Gender Impact Assessment is one thing in one country and another in another country.

## **Risk of overlooking the importance of gender balance in STEM**

The UNFCCC GAP does not explicitly address the importance of gender imbalances in STEM fields. However, in implementing priority area B focusing on gender balance, participation, and women's leadership, it is crucial to go beyond merely increasing the numerical representation of women in international climate negotiations, delegations, and UNFCCC processes. The underrepresentation of women in STEM fields and, by extension, in green jobs poses a significant barrier to achieving gender equality in the Nordic countries' green transition. This disparity not only reflects existing gender imbalances in education and employment but also risks perpetuating these inequalities as the green transition progresses.

## **Techno-framing of climate policies and green transition**

Climate change is frequently portrayed as a technological challenge. This calls for expertise primarily found in the male-dominated STEM fields, overshadowing the social dimensions of climate change and the contributions of professionals from non-STEM backgrounds. In other words, focusing exclusively on STEM risks sidelining the social dimensions of climate change and the contributions of women and non-STEM professionals in climate action. Furthermore, the absence of specific measures acknowledging the significance of unpaid care and domestic work in the green transition poses a risk of exacerbating gender inequality, as women in the Nordic countries continue to bear the brunt of unpaid domestic work.

## **Limited coordination and coherence in gender equality work**

In Denmark and Norway, the absence of inter-ministerial working groups and/or agencies with gender expertise hinders the translation of the UNFCCC GAP into national governance and the coordination of gender mainstreaming in climate policies across relevant ministries, offices, and public institutions. Additionally, the limited allocation of specific resources, such as funding and personnel crucial for gender mainstreaming, further impedes its effective implementation. This challenge is not just confined to financial resources but also extends to the lack of dedicated personnel tasked with driving the gender mainstreaming agenda. The lack of coordination and resources is fundamentally a question of political will and prioritisation and can be strengthened in all of the Nordic countries.

## **Absence of comprehensive strategies targeting the implementation of the UNFCCC GAP**

A notable gap in the Nordic implementation of the UNFCCC GAP is the general absence of dedicated national strategies for implementing the specific GAP priority areas and activities. Sweden stands out for its draft strategy aimed at gender mainstreaming the implementation of the Paris Agreement, which is based on a national translation of the UNFCCC GAP into a Swedish context. However, such targeted approaches remain rare, highlighting a widespread barrier to fully implementing the UNFCCC GAP. The importance of a focused strategy and/or action plan for gender mainstreaming the implementation of the Paris Agreement, including objectives and indicators, is also desirable in order to ensure the foundation for systematic monitoring and evaluations, which is lacking today.

## **Limited or lacking integration of gender equality in just transition**

A gap in the coherence of implementing the UNFCCC GAP in the Nordic countries is the inconsistent integration of gender equality into the concept of a 'just transition' or 'socially balanced' climate policy. There is a tendency to treat just transition as primarily a socio-economic issue rather than one that directly encompasses gender aspects, thus overlooking the specific gendered impacts of climate policy. For example, in climate policy documents from both Denmark and Norway, 'just transition' or 'social balance' is emphasised without specifically addressing gender considerations. Consequently, the concepts and ambitions of the just transition are observed to lack gender responsiveness.

## **Limited systematic synergy between implementing UNFCCC GAP and the SDGs**

Another observed gap relates to the systematic implementation of the Agenda 2030 SDGs, particularly SDG 5 on gender equality, alongside the SDGs related to climate objectives, particularly SDG 13. While Denmark's approach to SDG implementation involves screening new regulations for their impact on SDGs, this strategy does not explicitly prioritise gender-focused actions within the climate domain. The review points to room for improvement in explicitly integrating gender equality considerations into SDG implementation efforts, ensuring that gender perspectives are adequately incorporated into climate policy as directed by the UNFCCC GAP.

## **Limited gender expertise and expert consultation**

Both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders argue that gender experts are sometimes either not consulted or invited too late in the policymaking process, or their contributions are not included in the final strategies, policies, etc. Another relevant finding is that due to time constraints in policymaking processes, there is not enough time to build trust or bring all relevant parties to the table.

## **Gaps and limitations in stated goals in documents and gender mainstreaming efforts**

The extent to which gender is mainstreamed into key climate policy documents, such as National Climate Action Plans and Long-term Low-emission Strategies, varies among the Nordic countries. In some cases, climate policy documents come across as gender-blind, while other examples within the same country showcase efforts towards gender mainstreaming in climate policy.

## Limited and irregular monitoring- and reporting mechanisms

An absence of specific mechanisms dedicated to evaluating the effectiveness of gender-responsive measures in climate policies indicates a broader issue within the international framework for addressing the gender-climate nexus, highlighting a significant area for improvement in achieving a comprehensive and consistent understanding and integration of gender considerations within climate policy and action.

A noteworthy gap in successfully implementing the UNFCCC GAP is the lack of a systematic evaluation framework for the GAP, which means that there is a lack of clear structures for the processes of monitoring and reporting national (incl. regional and local) progress. Although the Biennial Reports to the UNFCCC include references to gender equality, the lack of mandated goals or indicators for this specific intersection further emphasises the deficiency in monitoring mechanisms.



# 5 Best practices

This chapter presents an overview of best practice examples for implementing the UNFCCC GAP in the Nordic countries on national and local levels. The overview consists of examples already presented throughout the review, as well as additional best practice cases encountered as part of the assessment process.

## 5.1 National level

### **Mandatory Gender budgeting at state level (IS)**

In Iceland, gender budgeting has been mandatory at the state level since 2015. The legislation is directed by the Public Finance Act, and a gender budgeting steering committee led by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs oversees the gender budgeting implementation. Gender experts/representatives within each ministry cooperate with inter-ministerial steering groups that are responsible for implementing gender budgeting within each ministry.

On its website, The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs provides information on and training in gender budgeting, including a short video explainer focusing on gender budgeting in relation to the reduction of pollution in Icelandic with English subtitles.

### **Advanced programme for gender mainstreaming in government agencies (SE)**

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency has launched a programme for gender mainstreaming in government agencies (GMGA+), focusing on developing and implementing a model for systematic knowledge exchange and sharing of best practices in relation to gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in the public sector.<sup>[38]</sup> In 2024, the new cohort of government agencies includes a director general for the sectors working with green transitions and environment.

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38. Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2020.) Gender mainstreaming in government agencies.

## Gender mainstreaming training (FI)

The Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare provide training material in gender mainstreaming through the governmental digital learning platform eOppiva.<sup>[39]</sup> The Ministry also maintains the website Promoting Gender Equality, offering guidance and a checklist for gender mainstreaming.<sup>[40]</sup>

## Inclusion of external gender experts (SE)

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has invited researchers with expertise in climate, environment, gender, and democracy to facilitate open lectures.

## Inclusive stakeholder involvement processes (FI)

In relation to making a new national Climate and Energy Strategy, the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment hosted an open public consultation on the interlinkage between gender and climate policies for all interested stakeholders<sup>[41]</sup>. Subsequently, the national Climate and Energy Strategy was subject to a gender impact assessment carried out by an external consultant.

## Draft Strategy for gender mainstreaming the implementation of the Paris Agreement (SE)

In 2021, the Swedish government mandated the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency to formulate a strategy for integrating gender equality into Sweden's implementation of the Paris Agreement. The strategy includes various focus areas such as capacity development, knowledge dissemination, and equal representation in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. The strategy is thus a national translation of the is the UNFCCC GAP. For further info, see chapter 4.3.5.

## Project: Gender and consumption (IS)

In 2020–2023, the Icelandic Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resource in collaboration with the Environment Agency of Iceland, the Consumer Agency, the Red Cross, the company Aftur, and Iceland University of the Arts, launched a project focusing on circular economy and textile waste. By integrating gender perspectives into waste prevention measures, the project also sought to promote green employment opportunities, address wage inequality, and enhance working conditions in the textile industry.<sup>[42]</sup>

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39. eOppiva, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and Institute of Health and Welfare (2020). Gender equality and equality – Why and How?

40. Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (n.d.). Equality checklist for authorities

41. Lander Svendsen, N., Weber, K. et al (2022). How climate policies impact gender and vice versa in a Nordic context

42. Icelandic Prime Minister's Office (2019). Proposal for Parliamentary Resolution on a Gender Equality Action Programme for the period of 2020–2023

## 5.2 Local and municipal level

### Gender budgeting (IS)

Reykjavík City has implemented gender budgeting across all departments. Gender budgeting as well as all gender mainstreaming work is facilitated by a Gender Budgeting Project Manager. Written instructions and video guides for Gender Budgeting as well as gender analyses are available online.<sup>[43]</sup> All new projects are subjected to a gender analysis carried out by City staff.

### Gender equality in climate strategy (SE)

Umeå municipality has formulated a gender equality goal in their "Climate contract".<sup>[44]</sup> This contract is developed as part of the municipality's participation in the Viable Cities Network.<sup>[45]</sup>

### Collaboration on increased gender balance in the STEM fields (DK)

Region Midtjylland has initiated efforts targeting the gender imbalance in specifically the care sector and the STEM fields.<sup>[46]</sup> The aim of the initiative is to enhance diversity and bolster the workforce and is thus not explicitly linked to promoting gender equality in the green transition. However, engagement in STEM education and professional environments inherently leads to a greater number of women influencing green transition initiatives and projects. The initiative involves collaborating with educational institutions to encourage and support underrepresented genders to pursue professions within this field. The set goal is a minimum representation of 10% women.

### Iceland School of Energy (IS)

Iceland School of Energy (ISE) at Reykjavik University has for a decade been committed to countering the gender imbalance in their educational programmes. One initiative is the Women in Energy Scholarship, which supports female students by covering one-third of the tuition for master's programs.<sup>[47]</sup> ISE has been very successive in countering the gender imbalance, with a 66% of female enrolments in 2023, compared to 34% in 2018.<sup>[48]</sup>

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43. Reykjavík City (n.d.). Gender Budgeting

44. Umeå Municipality (2022), Climate contract 2030 Between the municipality of Umeå and the authorities The Energy Agency, Vinnova, Formas, the Agency for Growth, the Swedish Transport Agency, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and Viable Cities

45. Viable Cities (2024). Together for climate-neutral cities

46. Region Central Jutland (2021), Strategy for sustainability 2030

47. Iceland School of Energy, Reykjavik University (n.d.). Scholarships.

48. Iceland School of Energy, Reykjavik University (2023). Iceland's Women's Strike: Empowering Energy Equality.

## **Gender analyses as part of bicycle strategy process (NO)**

Oslo municipality has carried out a gender analyses as part of their bicycle strategy process. As a result of that analyses, gender dimensions are integrated into Oslo Municipality's Oslo bicycle strategy 2015–2025.<sup>[49]</sup>

## **Collaboration with the University, including students conducting gender analyses (IS)**

The Government Offices of Iceland and the City of Reykjavík have an agreement with the University of Iceland about students carrying out projects and theses on gender mainstreaming- and budgeting in relation to national and local policies and initiatives. The initiative is led by Dr. Finnborg Salome Steinþórsdóttir since 2016.

## **Knowledge hub on climate and gender (IS)**

The City of Reykjavík has launched a Knowledge Hub on Climate Change.<sup>[50]</sup> The Knowledge Hub offers knowledge on gendered aspects of climate change and climate policies, tools, and best practices from across the Nordics, and the purpose is to render this information accessible to local communities, government authorities, and public institutions in the policy development and planning towards just, green transition.

# **5.3 Civil society**

## **Advocacy and monitoring of gender mainstreaming in the green transition (DK + NO)**

Both KVINFO (DK), Kilden Gender research (NO) and CONCORD (SE) have published numerous papers and reports on gender equality in the green transition and in climate policy making. Furthermore, these organisations have hosted events, seminars and conferences inviting policy makers and ministers from relevant ministries. Especially in countries where gender mainstreaming is less institutionalised, pressure from the civil society is important in pushing the agenda.

KVINFO has reviewed the gender equality assessments of legislative proposals in all Danish ministries, including Ministry of Climate, Energy, and Utilities and the Ministry of Environment and Food. This is an effective strategy in reminding the government of its responsibility as well as the importance of gender mainstreaming in climate policies.

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49. Oslo Municipality (2014), Oslo bicycle strategy 2015–2025  
50. Reykjavík (n.d.). Climate Change Knowledge Hub

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# About this publication

## Policy brief: A review of the Nordic implementation of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan

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## Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, economics and culture and plays an important role in European and international forums. The Nordic community strives for a strong Nordic Region in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation promotes regional interests and values in a global world. The values shared by the Nordic countries help make the region one of the most innovative and competitive in the world.

The Nordic Council of Ministers

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