



## KVINFO Expert Database

Denmark

1997-2014

### Summary

KVINFO is the Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity. In 1997 it launched its online *Expert Database* to improve women's visibility in the media and their access to high-level positions in media organisations. The database now lists nearly 1,200 women from all areas of society. They include scientists and researchers, business women and managers, politicians, journalists and figures from the world of art and culture.

Though women are very visible in the Danish media and fill prestigious roles such as news anchors, war reporters and CEOs of media channels, there is little public debate on the topic. The general assumption is that gender equality has already been achieved, and ethnicity is the main area where action is needed. Although Danish women are among the best educated in the world, 72% of experts featuring in the media in 2010 were men.

The database provides journalists, employers, conference organisers and others with a user-friendly tool they can use to search for female experts with specific qualifications and skills in a wide range of fields (science, business, politics, culture, art). It thus makes women experts visible to journalists, and increases the weight and voice of women in the media. Though its main target is the media, it also aims to attract users among employers, conference organisers and the wider public.

The database has had an effect, and media coverage has started to redress its previous bias. A virtuous circle has been established, as more media organisations are using it, encouraging more women experts to join, and vice versa.

The experience has been widely recognised as a good practice, and KVINFO has worked with local organisations to set up similar databases labelled *Who is She* in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt.

### A policy lacuna

Even in Denmark, there are considerable yet unacknowledged gender gaps in access to expression in media contents and within media organisations. Despite these gaps being well-established (*Who Makes the News, National Report on Denmark 2010*), these are seldom spoken about in Denmark, which is a country that prides itself that gender equality has already been achieved (it is institutionalised as part of public politics and as an official political discourse).

The fact that these gender equality issues in media are largely unacknowledged may derive from the fact that women are in fact visible within the overall Danish media landscape: they feature in prestige roles, such as anchors for the leading TV news channels, war reporters, and journalists covering hard news. Furthermore, the CEOs of two of the leading TV channels are women and the CEOs of two leading Danish newspapers are also women (Lisbeth Knudsen at *Berlingske Tidende* and Anne-Mette Svane at *Politiken*). Yet these women represent an exception, as Danish media are a male-dominated environment. If there is any debate about inequality of access to expression in and through the Danish media, it has tended to focus on ethnic minorities rather than on women.

In understanding the current situation in Danish media regarding unequal access to expression (for both women and ethnic minorities), two concepts are key: freedom of speech and self-censorship. These notions have been vehemently debated in Denmark, leading to a general condemnation of all forms of censorship and, in practice, resulting in the absence of any political will to provide guidelines for media content in any way.

As to access and participation to decision-making within media organisations, many documents provide evidence for the existence of a gender pay gap among journalists and of gender imbalances in access to top-level managerial and editorial positions. The reasons for the existence of gender imbalances in and through the media are an inadequate national media legislative framework safeguarding gender equality, and the widespread feeling that gender equality has already been achieved in Denmark.

### Women from all areas of expertise

The *KVINFO Expert Database* lists women experts from all areas of society, and is designed to heighten the visibility of women's professional competencies. It has spun off similar databases in Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt which go under the name of *Who is She*.

The database can be found on the KVINFO

website, but journalists can also find it on InfoMedia, a tool which all Danish journalists share. Though its main target is the media, the database also serves the wider public. It provides employers, conference organisers and others with a user-friendly tool that they can use to search for female experts with specific qualifications and skills in a wide range of fields.

The database presents comprehensive CVs of female experts from all areas of society, including scientists and researchers, managers, politicians, and persons from the world of arts and culture.

It has brought about several specific changes. It has increased professional women's visibility in the media and the public sphere. The editor has built up a good reputation among media organisations and women experts, so that media use the database and more and more experts are joining it. Women's approach to media is changing, so that female managers and researchers are keen to participate and no longer need to be pushed (whereas 10 years ago, two women out of three would refuse to be included). A virtuous circle has thus been established. A forward-looking effect is that experts are becoming role models for younger women looking to develop their careers.

### A sustainable impact

The KVINFO Expert Database is sustainable, as its editor (who is a staff member of KVINFO's library and is funded by the library) has the institutional and management capacity to produce all the resources the intervention needs to be continued.

1176 profiler  
på kvinder i forskning,  
erhvervsliv, forvaltning,  
kultur og politik

Rushy Rashid Højbjerg »  
Journalist



søg i ekspertdatabasen

It is a relevant solution to the problem that it addresses, i.e. the gender imbalance in the number of experts featuring in the media. In 2010, 72% of these were men and only 28% were women, according to the global survey *Who Makes the News* (GMMP) in 2010, despite Danish women being amongst the best educated in the world. The KVINFO Expert Database is considered to be a good practice because it is one of the best-known experts' databases in Europe. It meets most of the best practice criteria for 'women's access and participation to expression and decision-making in and through the media' because its approach focuses on the role of women in the social construction of reality and it has a clear, appropriate, comprehensive definition of women's access and participation to expression in and through the media. The database aims to increase women experts' chances of becoming more visible in the media, and therefore has the potential to enable women to access prestigious roles. It also contributes to diversifying the range of domains women have access to, as the women included in the database cover a wide range of fields. The database clearly aims to counter women's segregation into 'pink issues' and has the potential to increase the attention paid to women's social, economic and cultural issues. Finally, the database has encouraged the creation of women's networks. As concerns the specific elements for the field of intervention, it has a clear definition of the monitoring purposes, and monitoring is conducted using a clearly defined and consistent methodological approach.

### Building quality



**Launch of *Who is She* in Amman, Jordan in 2010**

The KVINFO Expert Database has proven effective in achieving its main goal of making professional women more visible. It is also efficient at doing this, even though building it up and maintaining demands time and resources.

This success is measured by the way women experts are achieving better visibility in Danish society, and are actively asking to join. This was not the case at first, as many women preferred to be known first and foremost as experts rather than women, and journalists were sceptical that there was a problem with women's representation in the media.

entation in the media.

This success has relied on building up the databases through partnerships, and by designing it to be user-friendly for experts and journalists, as well as others.

Service quality is constantly being improved though the use of Google Analytics to evaluate how the database is used, which indicates ways to improve the technical facilities and to develop its content. The experts featured provide the editors with feedback on the calls they receive from media organisations and other actors in Danish society. KVINFO also benefits from a continual exchange of experience with the editors of the *Who is She* databases. However there are of course ways in which its technical performance could be improved, for



instance migrating it to a better version of Drupal, making it accessible from mobile phones and integrating it with social media. Plans for the future include finding a partner and fundraising.

### **Tips for success**

KVINFO has the following tips for establishing a successful expert database:

- In building up a database, it is important to work with people from the media, so as to ensure that it contains credible consent and it convenient for journalists to use.
- If they are to be widely used, databases must be easy to find and use, be professionally designed, and be free of charge.
- Have an editor who undertakes research, encourages new experts and builds relationships of trust with them.
- Put an easy search tool on the website, and to have technicians who can provide immediate help when something goes wrong.
- Use an easy back-end content management system, where the experts can write their own profile in specific categories.
- Nominate a specific person who confirms and proofreads the data the experts have written, so that the database is trustworthy.
- Promote the expert database to the media, to the experts and to the universities where journalists are educated.
- Place some representative pictures of some famous experts on the website: it increases the project's credibility and produces a 'snowball' effect, with more experts asking to join the database.
- Remember that women in the database are really happy to meet and network with each other.

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### **Further information:**

KVINFOs Ekspertdatabase: <http://www.kvinfo.dk/side/383/>  
Who is She - Lebanon: <http://whoisshe.lau.edu.lb/>  
Who is She - Jordan: <http://www.whoisshe-women.jo/>  
Who is She - Egypt: <http://whoisshe.wmf.org.eg/>  
Middleeastexperts.dk: <http://middleeastexperts.dk/>  
WoMen Dialogue article on Who is She:  
<http://www.womendialogue.org/projects/%E2%80%98who-she%E2%80%99-database-women-professionals>

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