

WELCOME – SPEECH

Lige inden din velkomsttale, byder Gudbjörg velkommen til Island

- My name is Grete Christensen and as president of the Nordic Nurses Federation, I would like to welcome you all to this conference on Equal Pay and Working Conditions.
- The aim of the conference is to exchange knowledge, strategies and ideas about the pay and working conditions for the Nordic nurses – and with a particular attention to the different strategies in the Nordic countries regarding ensuring equal pay.
- We have all received background material emphasizing potential for improvement - but at the same time the document shows a lot of activity and action in the different Nordic countries.
- In the Nordic Nurses Federation, we enjoy a close and important collaboration between the Nordic Nursing Associations. We share a long history, as the federation was established back in 1920. And the history has taught us, that together we are stronger.
- It is not a coincident, that we are gathered today around a conference with the theme salary and working conditions. Already back at the establishing meeting in Copenhagen in September 1920, one of the main objectives agreed on, were improving the Nordic nurses' pay and working conditions. Even though the theme is still relevant, we have seen many improvements due to the great work from the Nordic nurses' associations and NNF.
- The work of NNF has been essential for the acknowledge of nursing as a profession – and not just a vocation. NNF focused on; reduction of working hours, the acceptance of marriage and that nurses should be entitled to live in their own home. All those goals were achieved.

- And during the post-war years, pay became a key issue. At the congress in 1946, equal pay was part of the agenda for the first time. A pay committee was settled, and the first Nordic report on pay levels for nurses was published in 1957 and more were to come. It was clear, that the nursing profession, being traditionally a female dominated job, was lacking behind. NNF felt a responsibility to influence outside the borders of the Nordic countries.
- Therefor NNF took initiative to put decent pay and working conditions on the international agenda at ICN and ILO. Their hard work was fruitful – in 1977 ILO adopted a convention on nurses' employment, working and living conditions.
- These examples show, that we do have a long history in terms of influencing the national, Nordic and global agenda around this important topic.
- The changing needs of the 21st Century mean nurses have an even greater role to play in the future – however, the shortage of nurses worldwide is a fact, and the politicians and policy makers cannot ignore the significance of pay and decent working conditions as a factor influencing recruitment and retention of nurses.
- At the same time, we have a responsibility as nursing associations – we must influence the agenda. We need to use our voice and speak up.

- And yesterday NNF took another important step – we have decided to be part of the important global campaign; Nursing Now. Nursing Now is a global campaign in collaboration with ICN and WHO. The aim of the campaign is to raise the profile and status of the nurses worldwide.
- Nurses are playing a crucial role - and are expected to play an even greater role - within the health system. And the nurses are ready to work within their full potential of scope – But - it requires that nurses are properly valued. Investments in nurses are needed. And that's why we have launched Nursing Now Nordic – because we want to be partners in this agenda. We have several projects in the pipeline - inspired by the slogan of Nursing Now: “Big visions – small steps – move fast”
- It is important to emphasize, that equal pay is a fundamental human right. It's about time the work within female dominated professions is valued fairly and ending the pay discrimination, compared to the male dominated professions with same length of education. The next two days we will focus on equal pay in a Nordic setting. We have speakers from all six Nordic countries to share different perspectives on the topic.
- I hope this conference will broaden our knowledge and contribute to further discussion on how to approach this issue in both national and Nordic settings.

I would like to end this speech by giving the floor to a Danish Professor, Tine Rostgaard. Tine works at VIVE, a Danish Center in Social Science Research. Tine will start this conference with a presentation about: Gender equality in a Nordic perspective – Policies and outcomes.