

Nordic Hairdressers Union Conference
September 5-7, 2022

Monday, September 5th

Lilja Sæm welcomed the attendees from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Denmark and went over practical things for the next few days. Until now, the Nordic Congress has taken place every two years. But during Iceland's presidency, one more year was added due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Here we are now together again to meet up and compare our books on what was happening in the hairdressing industry in the last three years and what is ahead. We discuss and try to gain inspiration for what we can do for our profession, among other things, in terms of education, collective agreements and working environment issues. There was a short break during the meeting so that the attendees could get to know each other and perform a few salsa steps to warm up the attendees for the day's program.

The Icelandic Confederation of Labour

Kristján Þórður Snæbjarnarson president of ASÍ (The Icelandic Confederation of Labour) came up next with a lecture, and talked about the participation of Icelanders in trade unions, which is in the range 86-92%. Good cooperation between the Nordic countries means that for example the collective agreement studies are often similar.

The economy is getting going again after COVID 19 which is very positive. Unemployment is very low in Iceland and there is a considerable shortage of employment in all kinds of jobs. A lot of foreign labour is imported to take care of the structure of the Icelandic labour market. During Covid 19 a lot of labour has turned to other jobs and even to their home countries, and there is a shortage of labour in many sectors.

In Iceland there is a shortage of housing, a large increase in housing prices, a lack of housing for people with low income. The rental market is difficult and we are trying to make it more stable. The electricity prices have not affected us here as in the northern countries. No shortage of heat and electricity here.

Efforts to monitor that staff are getting the right salary and that collective agreements are in place, are being followed.

Most Collective agreements end in November and negotiations with the negotiators will begin in the next few days. With 9.7% inflation, there is little optimism for the upcoming collective agreements. Minimum wages have been in law in Iceland since 1980 and must be included in collective agreements. In Iceland it usually takes 3-6 months to negotiate a collective agreement and

negotiations usually do not start until just before the contract period expires, unlike in other northern countries where it takes much less time, we must manage to reduce the time.

- Questions regarding the lecture:

Why does it take so long to negotiate? Because there is no way to get what is normal as an increase, the companies do not want to be first because the companies that come after get better contracts. The Icelandic currency is not stable. We cannot decide to go on strike, the members have to vote on it.

Do non-members have to follow collective agreements? Yes, everyone has to follow wage agreements and also the employer has to follow them.

Country report

Denmark

Next on the podium was Lone Frost. In Denmark they were closed during covid, and have lost many union members after lockdown. At first the lockdown was 21 working days – 3.5 months for the second time. In the year 2020 there were 336 new members, but 439 left the union; 2021- 304 new but 474 left after covid. The members weren't satisfied because they said they didn't get their wages and started to be two and two together. Many have quit in the industry and turn to new jobs.

Last year graduated students in hairdressing were 294, 277 and 263, few students applied to study hairdressing, considerable attrition and more professionals are needed. Trainees now have to complete the contract before they finish school. The student has to be paid a salary, but the employer gets it back when the student completes the program. Currently, the employers are paid after a year, but not before the student begins. Hairdressers spend an average of 8.5 years in the profession - including 4 years of study. People are quitting because of allergies not because of stress injuries in the body. It seems that the average time is up to 12 years, but it hasn't been signed yet. It pays to use the gloves to reduce allergies. Need to take better care of mental health, and in Denmark people can work until they are 72. Chair rental is increasing and people in that business form are not having trainees.

Yellow trade unions are there, unfortunately not active enough and are not supporting members well enough, for example due to illness.

Covid – great fear, people cancelling appointments, everyone waiting to see what the government was going to do. Questions like: how should the students work? Are they on contract? Should you fire the staff and put them on benefits? Great uncertainty.

People were not paid full wages, were paid less, but of course had to pay all bills to the top. Staff had 200 DKK an hour but went down to 145 DKR when they received payments from the public sector.

Students studied online, have usually received two days in preparation for the exams but only got one day. Students skip the final exam and just got their certification.

No questions.

Norge

Norway's representative, Vivian Jacobsen stepped in and reviewed the situation in Norway. A big increase in members in April 2020, but now they are decreasing again, 2020 - 2506, 2021 > 2366. Hairdressers are leaving the profession and moving to another profession. No competition with other unions.

A newly graduated hairdresser has about 175 NKR, after 10 years of experience around 208 NKR per hour. The minimum wage is 33,800 NKR per month. The average working time of a hairdresser is 10-11 years after graduation. It is very rare for people in the hairdressing industry to work until retirement age. There is a lot of sickness, low wages and poor morale at work, mental health therefore not good enough and long working hours. Uncertainty about whether you will earn enough to pay everything. Increased stress.

Salons were open during the pandemic, but not many customers, and those on percentage wages did not get paid much. In Norway there is too much chair rental, and that is something we do not want because it affects the number of trainees who get a contract.

A lot of students stop studying and turn to other jobs. The main reasons for this are: the working environment, salary and working hours. People are not quitting because they no longer want to work with hair.

During the pandemic, salons were closed for 6 weeks, employees were temporarily laid off, but received about 70% of their wages. Trainees had no rights, but the association had contact with the parliament and trainees received 100% of their salary when they were dismissed. Many who took advantage of being able to temporarily lay off workers when they knew a quiet time was coming, as the workers were paid by the state in the meantime.

There have also been cases where the disinfectant used in COVID has destroyed the lungs and health of people working in the professions. Since it was necessary to disinfect a lot after each customer. There is currently an effort to teach the use of these materials.

Students are in school for 2 years and 2 years on a contract and take final exam (sveinsbrev)

Decreased enrollment in hairdressing study and more students on contract is wanted. But students see that the salary is not as high as in other trades, so they apply for another trade. The employer pays about 80,000 NKR per year in salary for trainees. Pays almost the entire cost of the year that it costs to have a student. In the second year, the student has started to take in clients and, as a result,

has started to earn his salary. A very high percentage of trainees in hairdressing drop out, around 30%.

There are about 16 thousand professionals today and about 8-10 thousand are members.

Questions?

Are the wages higher in other industries/trades? Mostly of the Hairdressers earn poorly in Norway compared to almost all other craftsmen and industries. All companies that signed apprentices-contracts (regardless of professional) in Norway receive public support from the authorities, the same amount per apprentice. When apprentice wages are as low as in the hairdressing industry, it is extra beneficial for hairdressing businesses to have apprentices, in terms of wages.

Sweden

Swedish representative, Ewa Björkman goes over their report. Members are 2020 approx 3000 and 2021 there were 2926, collective agreement are 594. Collective agreement negotiations for the hair start after the warehouses have been negotiated. Professionals have been asked what they want to emphasise in next negotiations.

There is only one union for hairdressers in Sweden and no other union trying to get the members in hair or beauticians.

Working hours are 173 hours per month, 40 hours per week. Average salary 2829 € per month, 16.35 € per hour. This is the absolute minimum wage for hairdressers who have completed their studies. If you are not trained, you will receive 70% of what a trained person receives. Illness among professionals 104 out of 1000 2021 and 7-8 days on sick leave.

25 days of vacation. If you have worked for 5 years in the same company you get an extra week.

Employees have a Health care allowance of 244.14 € per year based on full-time employment or a percentage of the employment rate. The working week is reduced by 10 hours per year. The average working age in the profession is about 8 years. Salons are normally small and intimate workplaces, so when problems arise, people often have a hard time mentally if you don't negotiate well enough with colleagues. Then there is also the stress of always being against the clock and being on a percentage salary. The chair rental is just the same as before, it's expensive to rent a chair, chair owners don't get to use everything they want, they don't get to decide the price or their working hours. Often intense competition for customers. Chair owners cannot be in the union. The advantages of chair rental are that it is a simpler way to own your own business.

Regarding Covid – nothing was closed. Have not seen the consequences of the pandemic yet, members are not leaving the union and the customers have started coming back to the salons. While Covid employers were permitted to cut down employee's working hours, the employer could cut

down employees so they worked 40% and at home 60% so not everyone was working at the same time and therefore fewer customers at a time. Employees were paid the average salary for the period Oct-Dec 2019, and the public sector came in with part of the salary. So people got paid their wages. Number of students, 2019 was 942, 2020 was 994. The numbers for 2021 are not confirmed but it is around 964. There is not much dropout. Students finish the school and then go and work 2000 hours on a contract then go for a journeyman's certificate.

Questions? Do you need a journeyman's degree to cut hair in Sweden? -No, the EU stops it. Have the same problem as us. The trade union and employers have created a special certificate that states what rights the professional has. The professional puts the sticker on his mirror so people can see that you are trained or learning hairdressing.

Finland

Next on the podium was Ville Filppula from Finland. The number of PAM members in the hairdressing sector is decreasing year by year. In 2020 the members were around 1700 members and in 2021 there were around 1600.

In Finland it is common to have generally binding collective agreements that cover the whole sector to have similar working conditions. There is no "generally binding" collective agreement active at the moment for hairdressers, but the union has been entering into company collective agreements with hair(saloons) companies recently. The contracts are quite similar between the companies. The general collective agreement ended in 2018.

One reason to lose members in Finland is that employers founded an association that offers earning related unemployment benefits if you lose your job. Their early payment is 99€ per year and employee union payment is 1.5% of gross salary. The working hours are 37.5 hours per week. The minimum salary is around 1700€ per month or 10.70€ per hour

In Finland, sick leave is a maximum of 10 days to 8 weeks per illness

It is stipulated by law that summer vacation is 4 weeks in summer and 1 week in winter.

There is quite a dropout in the industry and there are several reasons for this. Half of those who quit and go to other jobs, because of allergies, the working hours are unattractive and the pay is low.

Customers are stubborn, just like elsewhere in the Nordic countries. Since hairdressing salons are in most cases small businesses, there is often a difficult work ethic inside the salons. Regarding chair rental, it is considerably more risky for a young/new to the profession person who is starting in the profession of the hairdresser because if the hairdresser doesn't have enough clients to .

Covid: People were laid off temporarily, safe to say most got through this period well. As things stand today, there are no places for hairdressing students in salons.

Figures on the number of students; in 2019: 1443, 2020- 1335 and in 2021 1346

22% left hairdressing and went on to another course and 7% started working in other jobs.

No questions.

Iceland

Lilja Sæm was next to present the report from Iceland. The number of members of the union has remained similar between years. Major changes took place at the end of 2021, when the Association of Hairdressers and the FIT Association of Industrial and Technical Branches merged. FIT is a union with many industries like beautician, gardener, carpenters, plumbers, painters, and etc.

The last collective bargaining agreements were signed in the spring of 2018 and contracts will end on October 31, 2022, so collective bargaining negotiations are starting this fall. Recently, surveys have been sent out and meetings have been held with union members of the FIT to find out what their thoughts are and which people want to see in upcoming negotiations.

Working hours for a full-time position are 36.25 per week or 157 hours. per month, reduction of working hours is contractual at each workplace. Changes made in the last collective agreement were that now we only talk about active working hours. The minimum wage for a trained hairdresser is 3.489€ a month, with 5 years of work experience 3.633€ a month,, trainees for the first 12 weeks have 2375€ per month, trainees after 12 weeks 2494€ per month, and after 24 weeks 2763€ per month.

Sick leave with the same employer, first 6 months 2 days per month, after 6 months 1 month at full salary, after two years one month at full salary and one month at day work, after 3 years one month full salary and 2 months at day work. Summer vacation is 24-30 days depending on the employer and seniority.

We do not have data on how long people work in the hairdressing industry, nor how many people leave the profession due to illness, but in recent years there has been a large increase in the company's medical fund due to physiotherapists, psychological interviews and the like.

Chair rental, no problem for those who have worked in the industry for a long time, but difficult for those who have just graduated and do not have enough clients. In general, little else is available other than chair rental.

Covid conditioned hairdressing salons were closed, trainees had to study via computer. It can be said that we did a good job of bringing everything online. Hairdressing received very positive talk in the media during the pandemic and how important it was to have well-groomed hair. Politicians and other prominent people ended up on the pages of the media with bad haircuts and colour. The government participated in paying wages, paying 75% and companies 25%, but in the second shutdown it was 50/50

We are graduating a similar number of hairdressers every year.

A new system of apprenticeships was introduced last year, which is based on the fact that competence now determines the course. Students fill out a study history book and thus tick off the projects and can take an exam when it is considered that the person has the competence. So far we are not seeing good grades from this system, but have to see later how it is working.

Questions? Why does it matter that the grades are going down in the bachelor's exam? Because we want a good hairdresser with excellent skills. Hairdresser only needs to reach 4.5 which increases to 5. A lot of discussion about how to judge the test and put minimal grades up and, it is an absolute minimum to be able to report about 70% (7) proficiency on a final exam that you organise yourself.

Summary from the Nordic countries - comparison

Next up was Róbert Farestveit, an economist at the The Icelandic Confederation of Labour. Róbert made a summary of the presentations made by the countries at the meeting. Discussed, among other things, wages and pointed out that it was not realistic to have such a comparison, as it was different what lay behind, the structure of the societies was different, what lies behind the index of each country. He then summarised the number of working hours (hours), which is quite similar between the Nordic countries. Unemployment DK 2.4% FI 7% IS 3.8%, NO 2%, SE 7%, forecast for the year 2023 DK 2.5%, FI 6.6%, IS 4.8%, NO 1.9% and SE 6.8%

He then discussed the GDP of the countries as well as discussing the vast, future prospects and the effects of the war in Ukraine, which is starting to put a significant dent in our life worldwide.

BPRO

Next up was a presentation from the company BPRO, which is the importer of Davines hair care products in Iceland. Ingunn Sigurpálsdóttir introduced the Davines company which has a strong commitment to ethics and sustainability, product innovation and international business. Davines company vision is Sustainable Beauty: a combination of cutting-edge chemistry and respect for the environment and society, has led the Group to become a B Corporation. After Ingunn Sigurpálsdóttir presentation, members of the meeting made shampoo with their favourite fragrance.

Tuesday, September 6

Apprentice Centre - Digital Logbook

Apprentice Centre (<https://nemastofa.is/>). Unfortunately, the lecturer had a traffic accident and was unable to give a presentation on the Apprentice Centre. Lilja went over the Apprentice Centre's purpose and project. AC is to be a platform for collaboration between companies to make a

workplace for apprentices students. When students start their studies, they receive a Digital Logbook. Students complete the tasks and when they have reached the level of competence, they can apply to take a journeyman's or final exam in their skills. We are no longer working with defined working hours on the study contract. The AC goal is, among other things, to increase the number of companies and craftsmen who take trainees on a workplace learning contract. Assist companies and craftsmen in maintaining the quality of job training and targeted teaching and training of apprentices at the workplace, and maintain a strong promotion of vocational and vocational training.

The goal is to encourage companies to register on the publication register of companies with apprenticeships in trades and help. Have an overview of the number of trainees in workplace studies and estimate the need for trainee places in trades. Offer training and education to master craftsmen and supervisors who receive apprentices Be a collaborative forum for discussion on projects and subjects of training in the workplace. Host events and conferences on workplace learning and provide awards to exemplary companies. Introduce vocational and vocational training and diverse jobs in industry.

Because this erend from the Apprentice Centre was a little bit short, the meeting took time to discuss what project the board should work on for the next 2 years and it will be up to the board of the Nordic Hairdressers Union to decide which topics should be.

worked more with.

- The need to continue to push for health and safety laws and regulations in the beauty industry to be established
- Work on legislation that the equipment that hairdressers work with is quality certified, for example hair dryers.
- Educate teachers better, so they can guide students better on what they should be thinking about when choosing blow dryers and clothes, shoes you wear.
- Regulation about the customer chair, how low and high the chair should be able to go, it needs to be able to go lower. There are a lot of people who can't have their hands in the „right“ position because the chair is too high.
- Rules for minimum working space, not allowed to be too close to the next person or a wall or something.
- (NFU) Better networking platform, want to know in advance who is going to be at the meeting. Home page with information about everyone who will be at the meeting and what will be discussed at the meeting. Subsequently it appears that

there is still something on the danish website but is not in use. Need to fill in information there and keep it active or updated.

- Research has been done on musculoskeletal disorders in the hairdressing industry, but unfortunately it seems that there is a lack in some countries that this is recorded. The need for this to continue, look at countries that have this registered and try to influence better registrations so that there will be better information. Report from Denmark is coming.
- The safety sheets should be about the chemical not cosmetics. Change the laws?

Healthier work environment in Hairdressing

Hairdressers Rán and Heiðrún Birna came and talked about the status of an environmentally friendly hairdressing salon in Iceland, the first of which Rán opened in 2008 and said many things have changed in positive ways. Over the years, there have been attempts to hold courses for more environmentally friendly hairdressing salons, but unfortunately few attended and more often than not the educational courses were cancelled.

The schools that are teaching hairdressing in Iceland have been positive regarding this matter and have contacted us and requested education for students. Unfortunately, others have shown no interest.

Getting information about ingredients from hair care product sellers is often very difficult. Sellers are unfortunately too often not sufficiently well informed about the contents of the products they are selling. Getting answers to questions such as what is in the product and what would be better about it and how does the product improve the work environment, she always got the answer "at least this is better than it was". So we need better answers and education from those who are selling the product and the salespersons need to be educated. We need research behind the substances they use that might be harmless. There is a lot of greenwashing, but fortunately, the younger generation seems to be on board and the mindset has changed for the better, at least I would say that this is going in the right direction. And that is what matters.

The most environmentally friendly hairdressing salon in Iceland, "Græna stofan" is owned and run by Heiðrún Birna. The salon has 14 hairdressers, so it is a rather big salon. There are many trainees who want apprenticeships and a lot of new customers, so it is a growing business. Great awareness raising in the last 3-4 years. The schools that are teaching hairdressing have come with grants to teach more about green / eco-friendly hairdressing and better hair colours. The schools are also participating in all kinds of ERASMUS projects with other countries. Unfortunately, it is quite evident that teachers who are teaching hairdressing are not receiving enough updating or continuing

education in the field. So in a way it is not always the “right” teachers who are in these important projects.

It's not just about the environment but about our own health, always being in these substances, smells and noise. We put a lot of effort into having the best possible working environment. Calm music and not set too loud, have the lights not at full strength.

Any questions? What kind of bleaching do you use at the saloon? Blondor, it's oblique. Since we are far from all warehouses, we can't order other materials from another country because the amount is not enough, this is such a small and isolated market.

DK pointed out that in Denmark hairdressing students go to salons to get to know this policy better, just part of the training. It's called trendy hair colouring because it's not allowed to talk about green hairstyles. Norway only has one school that only teaches green hairstyles, the other countries are not teaching this.

Vinnueftirlitið (Work environment)

Guðmundur Mar Magnússon, Specialist - Dept. for Occupational Safety & Health, Administration of occupational safety & health, Iceland was next on the agenda. Guðmundur talked about the general work process at the inspectorate as well as what is specific to hairdressing salons. He then mentioned that he had not found a single work accident or illness (allergy or musculoskeletal problem) recorded in the hairdressing industry in the past decade. Which must be considered not right. For example, the use of gloves, masks, aprons and the like.

Risk assessment and its preparation with the OIRA tool. There you will find a list that you can use to review your own support. It is recommended that a position assessment be carried out once a year, unfortunately this is insufficient. It is however a very good tool that has been translated and adapted specifically to high-end beauty salons and is available on the organisation's website, it carries out the assessment, and at the end there is a report on the status of the issue and solutions to what needs to be improved, which can be printed or saved on the computer.

How do we make Hairdressing an interesting and positive workfield?

Kristjana Guðbrandsdóttir, Head of print and media, IDAN educational centre led the brainstorming work, see document about the result.

Wednesday, September 7

Nordic Hairdressers Union representative committee meeting (from 9-11)

Introducing the result from the group work from the day before “How do we make Hairdressing an interesting and positive workfield?” discussions about the results and the meeting agreed there would be a need to process the document more and decided to entrust the board of NFU to continue work with it further.

Lilja Sm ended the Nordic Hairdressers Union’s conference 2022 with the best wishes for the next two-year period and handed the presidency over to Norway as it is stipulated in the NFU laws.

Farewell and goodbye.