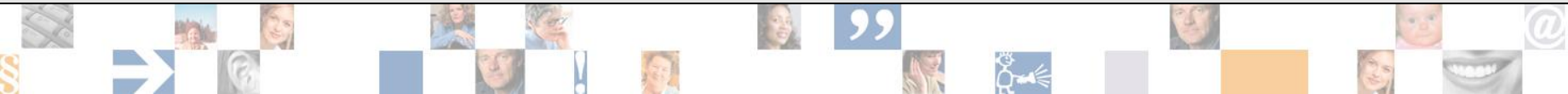





NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF CHILDREN AND EQUALITY

*Director General Arni Hole
Ministry of Children and Equality:*

***"Concerning Gender Politics,
Frameworks and Possibilities"***



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- Why Norway works well – gender equality and productivity
 - Measures to be taken
 - Lessons learned

Modern Gender Equality Policies deals with both genders.

- You will not succeed unless you address gender stereotypes among both genders. Or collectively shared stereotypes and images of genders, called “culture and tradition”.
- Culture or tradition **can never excuse inequality between the genders or gender based discrimination !**
- It seems like the women and girls always do initiate the actions and address gender issues.
- However, **unless** you invite men and boys onboard, you will experience having almost half of the population “outside” the common understanding of the challenges and meet resistance.
- Make clever alliances.

Evidence I

- The “proof” /evidence of the very existence of a challenge or an important issue, always rest on the party rising the issue.
- In our context: The women and girls.
- Rather, it should be the party who resists Gender Equality or does not see it as important, that should “prove” why not so...., but that is not the case!

Evidence II

- To arm yourself with the necessary arguments, tools and weapons, **you need accurate evidence and statistics.** Any sound gender policy, rests on solid facts and the logic of coherent argumentation.
- It is never enough to plead unfairness or “for the sake of democracy”.
- However, gender equality should be seen as a basic value in any society / culture.
- In our economic life, one simply has to find the buttons of “added value” and why gender equality is smart economy.
- The Human Rights arguments (based upon HR-conventions and covenants), ethical and philosophical views must of course, be included in the basic argumentation

The starting point of making up the “evidence” is always gender disaggregated statistics :

- demographic data
- ownership to property
- ownership to other assets and capital in a certain field of industry or sector of society
- ownership to “cultural capital” in a given sector
- company structures
- power structures, as the number of male and female directors
- Leadership in politics / local, regional or national
- or positions on boardrooms and other steering groups
- earnings and income related data
- types of educations and how they are made use of
- standards of living in specific geographical areas
- job opportunities / industrial and service sector structure in a given area
- household types
- family policies and flexibility in work-life
- early child care at hand
- transport systems
- Incidents of violence in families if it is gender based
- research and scientific structures

Then of course, comes the analyses of the statistics:

- Why are these informations important to develop sound and sustainable politics in a certain sector ?
- **Developing sound and sustainable policies in any sector**, can only be done by including a thorough gender perspective
- **Because as long as the two genders** are socialized differently and subjects to certain historical and cultural stereotypes and beliefs, different expectations and unequal chances, one needs the gender analyses. To meet targets adequately, "tailor-make" the use of public money, and to aim politics better!
- The analyses must embrace both genders. The notion of gender does not mean "women".

The simplest, but also most convincing arguments:


- How can any nation, any government, any sector, any industrial enterprise – afford to **loose out on talents** – divided evenly among the genders ?
- How can any firm or enterprise afford **not to engage all the creativity** it can lay hands on ?
- How can any industry or sector, loose the opportunity **to build a good reputation** in the market **by not including gender issues** ?
- We have learned that these arguments works!

What works , in the striving for gender equality ?

- It depends on whether one wants mere equality in chances/ **equal opportunities for men and women.**
- or **equality in results** and **outputs for women and men.** (using affirmative actions)
- Or a mix of both.
- Norway has used the mix of both the last 30 years.

A core would always be, regardless of measures:


To eliminate cultural and traditional stereotypes that continues to legitimize gender in-equality. To prove that such biases are bad for societal development , economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability

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- All cultures, traditions and religions in all types of societies have stereotypes.
 - When entering into cross-cultural dialogues, we have to respect traditions and religions. But it is also our duty, in accordance with the CEDAW, the CRC and other UN Human Rights Conventions,
 - to point to the fact that **all individuals , regardless of gender** have the right to participation in society, freedom of speech, to gainful and paid work, to own or inherit property, to reproductive health, the right to freedom from violence and so forth.

Stereotyping is done everywhere....

- Avoid the fallacy of thinking that women do not carry stereotypes, that only men do.
- Women in Scandinavia and Europe still talk of the home and children as “the women’s and mothers domain”, as if women have a specific gene for housework or child rearing, excluding the men as if not possessing such a gene....
- Women speak of “the husbands helping out in the house and with the children”, Again, exclusion of the men, or men as mere “assistants” in the house. As if the house work is not a shared responsibility, regardless of gender. Women must let go, too.
- The elite men of the upper echelons of economic life in Norway, exclaimed in 2003, when Parliament voted for gender balance quotas on boards of private companies: Able women cannot be found, the women will not take on such responsibilities, our firm will be broke or have to flee Norway as to prosper etc etc. **None of this was of course true. It was stereotyping.**
- Many men in decision – making positions speak of “typical female workplaces or jobs”. There are no such things. There is on the contrary historical and social traditions that have made women and men choose different occupations and professions.

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- Corporate culture is like invisible glue, it sticks to you, even when you do not think it does. Many able, corporate males, do not think they have biases.

Because the norm of a **business human being, still is the “rational economic male”**.

- **Important:** We should avoid “essentialism” either way; the notion of difference based upon an inherent “quality” or disqualification, being born as biological women (or men).
- The issue is to change notions of **historical** and **social gender** , if they are harmful and lead to discrimination and inequality.
- We should also avoid speaking of “men as such ” as elite or powerful, contrary to all women being some sort of victims. Few men do have elite position and power ,world-wide. **We have to be aware of social class when we discuss gender issues.**


In Norway; what works ? Examples of systematic work:

- **1950:** The tripartite cooperation between the State, Employers Federations and the Employees; the 1st Main Agreement. It lifted in Gender equality and family issues. (ILO was a great help and inspiration)
- **1966:** The largest social reform ever; The National Insurance Scheme, covering almost all welfare issues like minimum pensions for all, sick insurance, parental benefits, reproductive rights and gender issues (The financing of this Scheme / Law is by the three parties: State, employers and employees, and also self-employed).

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- **1975:** The first kindergarten Act with measures to expand the Early Child Care sector in all municipalities (The next Act came in 2002 and a nation wide program to provide full coverage of early child care places from 1st year of age, with 80% subsidies from the State).
- **1979:** The Gender Equality Act, covering all sectors of society, giving protection especially to women from being discriminated against ; it simply forbids discrimination on the basis of gender. (implemented and enforced by the Anti-discrimination and Equality Ombud)
- **1981:** A new amendment in the GE Act, requiring that all **public** appointed councils, boards, groups and committees, shall have not less than 40 % of the underrepr. gender. This was an affirmative action/quota by law. (overseen by the Ministry of Children and Equality)
- **1980's:** Most political parties employ quotas for women, voluntarily (not by law)
- **1993:** The Parental Benefit Scheme secures fathers 4 weeks rights to refunding of salary (not transferable to mothers) of the 42 weeks parental leave (now 56 weeks and 10 weeks obligatory to fathers). A typical; affirmative action. Has changed the images of masculinity a lot –over the years.

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- **1990's:** Public support to innovation and applied research, was asked to report on gender.
 - **1993:** The Municipal Act, requiring that all committees appointed by the politically elected Council, shall have a 40 -60 % gender balance. Again: Affirmative action by law. (Overseen by County Governors).
 - **2003:** The duty to take actions for gender equality in any private firm or public institution and to report annually, is included in the GE Act. (overseen by the Anti-discrimination and Equality Ombud). Very important tool!
 - **2003:** 4 laws amended in Parliament: The Public Limited Company law (the large enterprises noted at the stock exchange and with a wide spread of shares), the law governing the wholly State Owned Companies, the inter-municipally owned companies, the Companies ruled by specific laws). A very strong affirmative action, quotas of 40 % of the underrepr. gender in the boardrooms. Smart economy and democratic/fair. (Overseen and with sanctions by the National Business Register)

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- **2005:** A new law governing cooperatives in agrobusiness, forestry, consumers' and housing coop's. A requirement of 40 % women when the business has 1000 members or more. (the same sanctions as for the public ltd companies)
- **2007:** The comprehensive Strategic Plan for Gender Equality in agriculture, forestry and agrobusiness launched. Measured every year, as how targets are reached
- **2008:** The Cabinet launches the National Gender Equality Plan for kindergartens, schools and secondary schools, building upon 20 years of G.E. curriculaes for teachers and experiences from projects in kindergartens and schools – to teach G.E and counteract stereotypes of girls and boys as early as possible. (overseen by the National Authority for Education)
- **2008:** The Cabinet launches the National Action Plan for Women Entrepreneurs, with a budget line. (overseen by the Ministry of Trade and Industry)
- **2009:** A quota introduced for all the small companies owned by the municipalities with 2/3 of the stocks , for 40 -60 % gender balance on the boards (several 1000 companies producing welfare and services to the public , and should mirror the population). Typical affirmative action.
- **2009:** Full coverage og Early Child Care places to an affordable price max tax. New legal action concerning every child's right to a place.

Quotas work !

- From 2003 to 2008 we saw the increase from 7 % women to 40 % , on the boards of the Public Ltd.Companies (as mentioned above). On an average: 43 % women in all the 4 mentioned types of companies. The Coop's are soon there.
- We completely changed the male roles and models of masculinity when introducing the fathers quota in the Parental Leave Scheme. After 16 years in action and expanded to 10 obligatory weeks, we can tell by research, that this law also has changed the women's and mothers roles and how they perceive the balance between work and family life.
- So: Implementing Quotas also changes attitudes and beliefs in addition to produce gender-balance as out-come!

Campaigns and programmes work !

- The National Employers Federation set up (2004) **Female Future**. A programme to recruit and train women to board-room work that has been very successful. (Won a European Prize).
- Similar programmes are set up in the public sectors, in the financial sector etc , with great success.
- Several databases with women's CV's To pick from, when you look for able women to be nominated for election to your board or to invite to compete for top management positions.

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- You may:
Set high targets for Gender balance on boards by voluntarily **agreements or Charters, not quotas** (as in Denmark), signed by employers (Unions) and employees federations and the State. But these also need some sorts of “sanctions” if targets are not met in time.
- The buzzword is: Accountability by commitment and accounting, numbers and measuring, every year. **Establish a body for surveying and monitoring, for all actions taken or programmes launched.** Be sure to get public awareness of your programme or action, however small. Then do the name and blame – which is very bad for reputations ! (It always works in a market economy).



In any effort, programme, action, measure or legal system, accountability rules:

- Who is accountable and what are the sanctions when targets are not met ?
- One will never change the world with merely hopes, good intentions.
- Who /what could be positive models and set examples ?
- The road from well-meant rhetoric and dinner speeches - to material results, is hard and demand devoted and systematic work. It takes time. But learning from others is wise, as avoiding re-inventing the wheel.
- You need Governments with distinct political will.
- You need able partners for change, like Employers Federations, Trade Unions, NGO ´s and International cooperation.

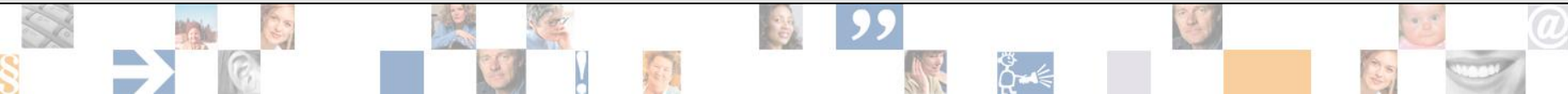


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Links

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Links to:

[National Social Scheme](#)

[Gender Equality Act](#)

[Act on Ethnic Discrimination](#)

[Parent and Child Act:](#)

[Marriage Act](#)

[Balanced gender representation on company boards](#)

[The rights of parents of small children](#)

[The municipal and county election](#)



Action Plans

[Action Plan for Combating Female Genital Mutilation](#)

[Action Plan against Forced Marriage](#)

[Turning Point - action plan to combat domestic violence](#)

[The Right to Life Free of Violence](#) (NOU 2003:31)



Offices and agencies associated with the Ministry of Children and Equality:

[The Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud](#)

[The ombudsman for Children](#)

[Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs \(Bufdir\)](#)

[The Consumer Ombudsman \(CO\)](#)

[The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration](#)

[Statistics Norway](#) (gender equality)

[The Ministry of Education and Research](#)

[Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training](#)

[The County Governor](#)



Acts, regulations and laws

[Instructions for Official Studies and Reports](#)

[Act relating to social services](#)

[Act relating to the municipal health services](#)

