



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF CHILDREN AND EQUALITY

Report No. 8 (2008–2009) to the Storting Chapter 1

# Men, Male Roles and Gender Equality

Chapter 1 Main contents of a Government White Paper



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**You will find the whole document in English on this link:**

**[http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/bld/tema/likestillingsomradet/menn og likestilling.html?id=1252](http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/bld/tema/likestillingsomradet/menn_og_likestilling.html?id=1252)**



# Men, Male Roles and Gender Equality

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## 1 Introduction

This document will be known as the White Paper Document from the government to Stortinget (Parliament) on male roles and gender equality. Gender equality has long been synonymous with women and their struggle for economic independence, equal pay, and equal power. It has also been a key principle in eliminating oppression and violence.

However, gender equality is about both men and women. Men spend less time together with their own children, are more prone to accidents, are over-represented in crime statistics, and drop out more often from upper secondary education. These examples indicate that men would have much to gain from true gender equality. Men are under-represented in the teaching professions in preschools and schools, in nursing and children's social services. At the same time, men still sit in the majority of positions of power in society and they still make more money than women. It is mainly men who are the perpetrators of domestic violence.

In recent years there have been positive changes in the role of males in society. It has been almost 20 years since the Committee on Male Roles in 1991 presented its recommendations. The Committee on Male Roles pointed out the following goals: the reallocation of power between women and men, more time for fathers to care for their own children both before and after a family breakup, reduced gender differences in choice of education and training and the prevention of men's violence against women; all of these were to be central goals for the future work towards gender equality. In several areas the development

in the period has been positive. In particular, there is reason to look at the development in the home, and the increased contact between fathers and their children. In other areas, however, the development has been stagnant or negative. While women have entered previous male arenas in the working life, there has not been any increase in employment of men in the health and care giving sectors. In the education sector men constitute a smaller group today than 15 years ago. Consequently, there is reason to reiterate the goals stated by the committee.

There is a need to summarize the changes that actually have occurred as a result of suggestions from the committee, and to consider new challenges in light of general social developments. One consequence of the suggestions that the committee provided has been the setting up of a separate "father quota" in the system for parental leave. This has contributed to changes in male roles and the traditional opinions about the characteristics associated with men and masculinity. The "new man" is, in fact, more equality-oriented. In particular, men today are more involved in caring for children, and changes in the role of the father have been great. Men have expanded their spheres of action.

Care giving is a kind of behaviour in men that should be stimulated. Care giving is in many ways the opposite of violence, and is also an important skill for the raising of, and being together with children, both at home as well as in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and schools. Within the field of care for the elderly, as well as

### Box 1.1 Changes in male roles since the Committee on Male Roles

- While men in the academic year 1993/1994 comprised 47% of the number who completed their education at universities and colleges, this number shrank to 37.7% in academic year 2006/2007
- In an investigation of equality in 1988, 95% of men answered that their partner was responsible for household cooking. In the investigation in 2007, only 48% of men answered the same.
- In 1990 fathers had around 12.5 working hours more than mothers per week. In 2005, this fell to about 8 hours.
- In 1988, only 1-2% of fathers took out available parental leave. In 2007, 9 out of 10 fathers who had the right to parental leave used the weeks they were allocated.
- In 1996, men accounted for 41.3% of the employees in the education sector. In the 2. quart of 2008 men accounted for only 34.6% of the employees.
- In the 1990's, 19 of 20 board members were men. In 2008, 6 of 10 board members in public limited companies were men.
- In the 1990's, children under 18 who lived only with their fathers, or the father and a new partner, were an exception. In 2008 this is the case for about 41 500 children, and merely since 2001 the number increased from around 29,000.
- In 1991 the mortality rate before 65 years was 41 per 1 000 for males and 22 per 1 000 for women. In 2007 the rate was 28 per 1 000 for men and 18 for women.
- Life expectancy at birth in 1991 was 74 years for men and for women 80. In 2007, life expectancy had increased to 78 and 83 years, respectively.

in nursing in general, men can play a significant role. Both men and women fall sick and need care, and they should have a right to meet people of both genders as caregivers.

Masculinity is commonly associated with a number of positive values and characteristics, just as femininity is. Together they form a diversity that provides the basis for social, cultural and economic growth in the community. There is how-

ever, reason to be critical of some behavioural features traditionally associated with masculinity. This applies particularly to any behaviour that in its nature may be harmful to others. Violence towards women and children or other men, including violence towards homosexuals, are examples of this. To limit the negative aspects of the impact of masculinity serves both women and men.

The government acknowledges that gender equality can only be achieved when men and women work together towards the same goals and agree that both masculinity and femininity have aspects where changes and new adjustments are required. Gender equality between the sexes is about changing attitudes in men and women as well as securing formal rights and duties at an individual and group level.

An important purpose of this report is to gather factual materials and data on men and male roles. The material shows clearly that there are great social differences between groups of men, and that there is good reason to use the term “the extreme gender” when referring to men. Men make up both the upper echelons and the lower strata of society. They are over-represented in the power forum, and yet they also top the statistics for violence, criminality and suicide. Eight out of ten pupils with serious behavioural problems in schools are boys.

In 2006, as background for this white paper, The Ministry of Children and Equality conducted a broad investigation to look at attitudes and daily life practice with regards to equality between men and women. *The results of this research are presented here in the different chapters of this white paper, and will be referred to collectively as “The Equality Research Survey”.*

The results can be found in the same Internet link that is named on the content page of this document. Specific policies of equality, such as the goal of ensuring equal access to education, regardless of gender, and childrearing without the stigma of gender stereotypes, find great support among women and men. The investigation also shows that equality is practiced on the home front through negotiations on both a daily basis and in the long term, and that men now participate much more positively towards taking responsibility for the physical and psychological health of the family. A total of 90% of both men and women believe that housework and breadwinning for the family should be divided equally between the sexes, and far more couples follow this principle on a daily basis.

At the same time, the investigation reveals that statistics regarding the labour market do not show any sign of being more equal; there has been little or no gender equality development by business itself, and the workplace serves more as a hindrance to equality of the sexes. When we also have a labour market that is split along gender lines, we see that the Norwegian society has major challenges in this field in the time ahead.

In August 2007, the Minister of Children and Gender Equality established a Men's panel that was given the mandate to discuss and create debate around the theme of men, male roles and masculinity in a gender equality perspective.

This panel was also asked to provide input to the work of this white paper. Suggestions that the Men's Panel presented in the Conclusive Memorandum of the Men's Panel are mentioned in the different parts of this report. The memorandum from the panel is also presented in the same Internet link as mentioned on the content page of this document. The Ministry finds that there was, almost without exception, full accord between the areas where the panel craved action and the aspects of men's situation that the white paper already was addressing.

The establishment of the Men's Panel showed in all ways the need to discuss male roles and men's situation in life. At the very least, it was interesting to see that so many viewed the composition of the panel as a provocation; some did not consider the men in the panel "real men". Such people seem to think they have an exclusive right to define the term "real man", and that it is only themselves that fall into this category. The reactions shows that the need to discuss male roles and the behaviour of men should absolutely be a topic of political and societal interest.

The portion of the population who has not been born in Norway has increased substantially over the last 15 years. Immigration from non-western countries has in particular increased. In the same period there has been shown far greater openness about sexual orientation, and diversity as an important value has broad support in the population. The factors mentioned show that male roles have indeed changed over the years since the Committee on Male Roles began and also that the spectrum of male roles has expanded. This white paper discusses various aspects of male roles and characteristics tied to masculinity.

The government acknowledges that giving men and women the same formal rights and obligations cannot in itself achieve equal treatment of

gender. Boys are brought up to keep back tears, while girls can acceptably cry in public; this is not illegal discrimination based on gender, but a culturally based discrimination that leads to men and women acting differently later in life. This white paper is primarily aimed towards putting the spotlight on social and cultural traditions that support the gender-based discrimination that represses boys and men and causes negative behaviour to be reproduced generation after generation. The purpose of the white paper is to determine how such discrimination and reproduction of unwanted behaviour can be eliminated.

Rights and obligations that only apply to one gender, must be considered as violations of the equal treatment principle and require special justification. Laws and rules are now mainly gender neutral, and according to these regulations, men and women have a good chance for equal opportunities in Norway. However, in some areas the government has set in motion affirmative action measures as a means to promote more equal opportunity in the future. The reason for these measures is that, in the long run, affirmative action will serve gender equality.

The government will work to ensure that financial arrangements, laws and regulations will be gender neutral and will not discriminate against one gender. In this white paper the government will examine and consider changes in rules and regulations that may be discriminatory towards boys and men. However, the historical cultural and collective attitudes that contribute to the unequal understanding and treatment of men and women are an equally great challenge for the individual boy and man. Such attitudes still set clear limits as to what girls and boys can choose, and the white paper suggests government measures in different areas of society to change these attitudes.

While the role of women changed dramatically during the seventies and eighties, the role of men has mainly seen changes during the last two decades. To now put the focus on men and gender equality does in no way downgrade the work still to be done for women and gender equality. On the contrary, the two are closely knit. The goal is still to ensure a high professional participation of women, to get more women into the leadership positions and onto boards. But there is also a goal for fathers to be able to spend more time together with their children. At the same time as there is a clear objective to reduce the difference in salary between female-dominated and male-dominated

professions, we aim to influence more men to choose the nursing profession or other occupations in which women are over-represented. To achieve a just distribution of power, responsibility and care giving is the overarching aim of gender equality.

Such a distribution will benefit both men and women, both the family and society.

## 1.1 Summary of the White Paper and suggestions for strategies and measures.

### *Chapter 2. Upbringing, educational and profession choices.*

In the spring of 2008, The Ministry of Education and Research has laid out its own action-plan for equality in preschools and elementary schools. The action-plan proposes a number of suggestions in order to improve the balance between genders, both in the educational choices that children and teenagers make, as well as the gender balance of employees within the sector. The objective is to change the traditional understanding concerning education and job choices, and this would be directed towards both genders whether they are pupils, students or jobseekers. In this chapter of the White Paper we discuss the need for an effort specifically directed towards boys within schools and higher education.

One characteristic of schools to be looked at is that boys from elementary and secondary schools, at all levels, generally have lower academic scores compared to girls: numbers from the *Directorate for Education (Utdanningsdirektoratet)* show that boys on average lay half a grade below girls at the completion of elementary school. This difference between sexes was also considerable twenty years ago. The government considers early intervention as its main instrument in amending learning difficulties. Statistics show that more boys than girls are in need of this intervention, although there are far fewer students (6,3 %) that actually receive special education than those who struggle on their own with learning difficulties. Harmony between schools and parents is also essential. Fathers in particular, especially those of minority backgrounds, must be encouraged to participate far more with the everyday aspects of the child's school life.

Research shows that boys and girls meet different expectations from both school and the

home when it comes to adjusting to school life. These gender-based differences in expectations could well affect boys negatively at a later stage in life. Research also shows a clear connection between expectations and learning. There is a need for more research concerning the reasons why the educational outcomes are different for boys and girls. A recent research report from NOVA found neither any indication that schools amplified gender differences, nor that schools helped to reduce these differences. Achieving poor graduation marks from primary education can contribute heavily towards desertion from higher education. When boys have a higher drop-out rate from higher education it weakens their future prospects in terms of educational and career choices.

The Ministry of Education and Research therefore seeks to increase its efforts to broaden public knowledge concerning gender differences in learning outcomes.

A change in educational choices made by individuals is necessary in order to improve the gender divided labour market. The existing educational and career counselling in schools would like to see more emphasis on untraditional educational choices. The Ministry of Education and Research's Action Plan for Equality in Early Childhood Education and Primary Education (2008-2010) and White Paper no.16 (2006-2007) have aimed at such changes through the introduction of divided counselling services for primary and secondary school students.

### *Chapter 3 – The gender divided workplace.*

The ministry wants to initiate an expansion of the terms of equality laws with regards to affirmative action on behalf of men, encompassing labour sectors that are working with adults, and where men are underrepresented (for example, the care giving and nursing sector). The Norwegian labour market is one of the most gender divided in Europe, and as the Gender Equality Survey of 2007 shows, the workplace is "slowing down" the progress towards equality between men and women. Nothing much has happened during the last twenty years when it comes to achieving a more even gender distribution in different trades and professions. A number of public campaigns have been launched to change this picture. "Equality in Agriculture", "Women in Administration" and "Women in Scientific Subjects" are a few such campaigns that have been launched. Equivalent



campaigns directed towards men have been fewer in number, but this is now changing through an action-plan concerning men in preschools and schools (Ministry of Education and Research).

Of the campaigns that have been aimed at getting men involved in working with children, one can name “Men in ECEC”, ([www.mibnett.no](http://www.mibnett.no)) and “Men in Schools” ([www.menniskolen.no](http://www.menniskolen.no)). There are also other sporadic projects under the Ministry for Health and Care Services; “The Lift of Competence” is one example.

In this chapter the government suggests strengthening the efforts and means to recruit men into female dominated businesses, and all public sectors shall have strategies to hold onto employees of the underrepresented gender. Increased access to affirmative action for men, in combination with more conscious recruitment and staff policies, could help even out the differences we find in today’s labour market.

The ECEC sector has had some good experience with recruitment strategies, where a moderate quota system has been combined with measures to recruit and retain men. From 2003 to 2007, the number of men employed by preschools has risen by 50 %. The preschools/day care centres that have succeeded (where at least 20% employees are men) have combined affirmative action with simple means of recruitment, for example marketing strategies where men are the target group.

#### *Chapter 4 – Fathers balancing work and family life.*

The government wants to arrange a support system so that fathers can take on more responsibility for their family and children. The government also wants to promote a family policy that strengthens equality in society and that gives men and women a chance to participate on equal grounds – in family life, working life and in organisations.

In accordance with the target in “The Soria-Moria declaration”, which concerns itself with independent rights for fathers, the government endorses that all fathers who have earned the right to parental benefits, should also have the right to receive the quota of time for fathers. This will give all fathers with the right to parental benefits the same possibility to take out a father’s quota. Today’s parental arrangement is complex and has general weaknesses regarding differential treatment of mothers and fathers.

To combine a full time job with a family life is a challenge for both mothers and fathers, but fathers tend to have to make different adaptations

compared to mothers. This may stem from collective opinions and cultural traditions in society and the workplace. Today less than 20% of fathers take out more than the earmarked six weeks from work that their “father’s quota” allows, and more than 80% of children live with their biological mother after a break-up of the family. Responsible, committed parenthood should apply to both genders, and both mothers and fathers are important caregivers for their children. This chapter deals with the status of and initiatives concerning equality between men and women, focusing on coherence between family life and work.

Expanding the quota for the father’s parental leave is the most efficient way to increase fathers’ usage of the parental leave of absence. In the government budget for 2009, it is proposed that the quota of time for fathers be increased to 10 weeks, and the total leave of combined absence increased by 2 weeks. The government aims to expand the quota of time for fathers with another 4 weeks to a total of 14 weeks, whereof 2 of those weeks will come as an extension of their period for aid/support. This builds a foundation for a substantial strengthening of the father’s care giving role and ensures flexibility for the family at the same time.

The Ministry also wants to work out how the system of a two-week leave of absence for caring at birth or change in childcare could be improved.

#### *Chapter 5. Men in couple and family relationships, and cooperation between parents after a family break-up.*

The government wants to strengthen the position of fathers as caregivers. Changes in family patterns have resulted in many fathers spending time with their stepchildren on a daily basis, but only periodic time with their biological children. New forms of organizing family life demand that men need to adapt further to the reality of their situation, and the male role must change. This is discussed in this chapter.

A separate governmental committee, The Committee of the Children Act (NOU 2008:9 The child in focus), has investigated changes in Children Act. A proposed government bill will follow up this report. Changes in the laws support progress towards more equal participation in terms of childcare from both parents after a break-up, and these developments encompass men and their care giving role.

The leading concern of changes in the law should be the best interests of the child. Legisla-

tion should encourage children to develop and sustain a relationship with both parents, even when the parents do not live together. In most cases this is in the child's best interest.

Mainly based on parental agreement, custody arrangements after a break-up result in the child living with its mother. When the court determines whom a child should live with permanently, the father's case is given an equal hearing. The children have in most cases a right to spend time with the father, conversely, the mother. The government wants to expand the definition of "usual visiting rights", and increase the framework for establishing visiting rights with a publicly appointed guardian. The changes will lead to increased time spent with fathers after a break-up. However, visiting agreements are often difficult when one parent chooses to move over great distances after a break up. Because of this, the government wants to introduce an ordinance that compels parents to inform each other ahead of time before one parent moves domestically, which will give the parents the opportunity to talk the matter over properly, and possibly negotiate with the court as to where the child should stay if they can not manage to agree. This ordinance or duty should apply to both the custodial parent and the parent with visiting rights.

In exceptional cases, the custodial parent impede or render visiting agreements impossible. There are also other reasons that determine why these obligations are not fulfilled. The government is concerned with the fact that custodial and visiting rights should be respected and wishes to clarify how the law may be strengthened on this account.

Men and women who are living together should have a collaborative agenda tied to their family life. A more even division of responsibilities and tasks would strengthen their relationship, and hence prevent a break-up. For couples with children, this will strengthen parenting skills in the best interests of the children. The aim is that both genders become equal partners and caregivers. At the same time it is important for businesses and the workplace to take into consideration that fathers also have children.

The Ministry wants to help make "Dad Groups", an initiative that will encompass the whole nation. Experience shows that men create these types of networks themselves to a lesser degree than women.

Fathers are still a minority when it comes to escorting children to health clinic inspections during the first year of a child's life. To break this pat-

tern the government proposes that fathers, in cases where both biological parents are living together, should receive support and encouragement to escort the child for the 8-month check-up.

### *Chapter 6 Gender differences in health*

Differences in the state of health between men and women are heavily linked with differences in lifestyle. In 1999 a committee put forward the first women's health report and pointed out the necessity of a "woman's and gender perspective" in health service. The White Paper describes specific initiatives to improve the gender perspective on health in this chapter. Available statistics show considerable gender differences in the way men and women evaluate their own state of health and in the evaluations given by health professionals. There is still close to a five-year difference in life expectancy between men and women.

The main challenges when it comes to equality within the health and care sectors are: to widen public knowledge about gender differences concerning health, illness and health services, and to consider these differences when developing initiatives concerning prevention and treatment of illness. The effort focuses on two levels. One is to include the new gender perspective into all activities and research where relevant. The other is to specifically focus on health problems that either men or women exclusively suffer from, or in which one gender represents the majority of cases, or suffers more severely from the problem.

The Ministry for Health and Care Services requests regional enterprises concerning health and the Norwegian Directorate of Health to ensure that health initiatives be developed with a gender perspective in mind. This perspective should be taken in all work with the treatment and prevention of health difficulties.

### *Chapter 7. Groups at risk of being marginalised*

An important objective for the government is to prevent exclusion from education and working life, and to give individuals every chance of a purposeful existence. This chapter concerns itself with risk groups amongst men, groups who are in danger of becoming marginalized. Statistics show that boys and men are in the majority in a number of these groups. The government does not plan for specific government measures geared towards boys and men in these groups, but more that all relevant services must have a gender perspective,

and if necessary, initiate measures that reach out to boys and men in particular.

The government acknowledges that there will always be a tentative balance between an individual's right to make his or her own decisions and the need for intervention. Intervention may be necessary, first and foremost from the local authorities. This type of intervention could concern persons or groups that are considered to be on the verge of a "life without purpose". Even though boys and men make up the majority of groups that are marginalized or at risk of becoming marginalized, one can not take for granted that the government should intervene and aim specific measures towards boys and men. In an equality context, it is important to establish whether these groups of men could be said to be suffering from direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of gender. Dropping out of higher education is a distinct risk factor when it comes to marginalization. It is a fact that more boys are deserting school compared with girls. For minority groups the rate of desertion is particularly high.

"Efforts to Prevent Desertion from Higher Education 2003-2005" has been an initiative under the direction of the Department of Education that has been enacted in recent years. The numbers suggest that intervention must have a stronger degree of focus on boys than we see today, and must distinctly focus on risk groups among boys. Young men are over-represented in the statistics of recipients of disability insurance and as single recipients of welfare benefits; this could be a consequence of the lack of intervention in the decision to drop out of higher education.

#### *Chapter 8 Men as perpetrators of violence.*

There exists a larger group with violent attitudes among men than among women, although the group still constitutes a minority of all men. This minority of men however, represents a threat towards women and equality, and at the same time a threat and a challenge to other men. In this chapter of the White Paper the Ministry also evaluates the services given to men that are victims of violence, for example domestic violence. An important objective is to prevent domestic violence. Anger and aggression management courses are initiatives of particular interest in this context. Statistics show that men constitute the majority of those targeted for these types of services.

Violent tendencies and the repetition of violent behaviour need to be prevented through offering

effective early help and treatment. A number of men annually contact the resource centre REFORM, and the local family counselling agencies, with a desire to receive help coping with anger. The Ministry aims to strengthen REFORM and their group services for men concerning anger management. The need for easily accessible services is greater than the actual help the service organisations are able to offer at the present time. The ministries want to intensify the establishing of open help and treatment services, particularly in the Middle, West and the North of Norway, where these services are few or non-existent. The Ministry of Justice, through ATV (Alternatives to Violence) and family counselling agencies will initiate the establishing of these services. The family counselling agencies and ATV will then further develop a closer cooperation in all regions.

Services at crisis centres are also central for the victims of domestic violence. Their service must become better adapted to help men who are victims of such violence.

Through effective programs one can prevent violence before it arises. The government's action plan "Turning Point" includes several primary prevention measures. "The Manifest against Bullying" also gives an outline of several initiatives concerning the building of attitudes in school. The international campaign "White Ribbon" is one example of a grassroots organisation that promotes zero tolerance of violence, and this will be supported in Norway as well.

Early prevention is the key. Even though extensive research has been completed on the connection between the use of violence and the consumption of media violence, there is no unity amongst media researchers concerning the effect of this consumption. The Ministry wants to begin to account for the connection between media violence that markets itself towards boys and men, and the bullying and violence we see in school and criminal statistics.

#### *Chapter 9 Contemporary gender and male research – about men and masculinity.*

"Gender is something one does, not something one is" is a common postulate from contemporary gender research. Gender research in general, and from the 1980's specific research on men, has highlighted the changes in men's behaviours as a social gender. In part 9 we summarize the research concerning men and masculinity as a phenomenon. It is a fact that social gender changes over

time. An example might be our attitude towards men with baby buggies – a common phenomenon today in Norway. From 2008, the Ministry has been financing their own male research professorship at the University of Oslo; they do so to support research on men as an important incentive for changes in the male role ahead.

## 1.2 Frames and machinery for gender equality

Although the Norwegian society has come a long way in the area of gender equality, it has not yet removed all forms of gender-based discrimination of women and men. This White Paper is intended to focus on the direct and indirect discrimination of men as a group or of groups of men (for example gay men).

The long-term political objectives of the government are in accord with the international regulations Norway is bound by in the area. The Norwegian government is committed to working towards full equality by three ILO conventions, the UN women's and human rights conventions, the EEA Agreement and a number of documents from the European Council. Several of the documents mentioned are also applicable in Norwegian law. The authorities have used an extensive set of economic, educational and organisational means, in addition to legal instruments, to achieve the long-term goal of real equality between women and men.

### 1.2.1 Laws on gender equality

According to the principle of gender equality, the rules and arrangements that have reserved positions, offices and arrangements for one gender (traditionally men), have gradually been removed. Today, there are very few job categories that are formally reserved for one gender. The Gender Equality Act provides for the possibility of reserving positions for one gender, but there are strict requirements. Objective reasons to do so must be given. Religious denominations have the opportunity to reserve certain positions associated with executing the faith for one gender (mainly men).

The Gender Equality Act, which was passed in 1978, is a key instrument in ensuring equality between the sexes, but is itself not gender neutral. Up to 1978, one has considered discrimination to be primarily directed against women. The Act was therefore worded in such a way that it cannot be considered to be gender neutral (see Section 1,

Gender Equality Act). The act provides for affirmative action in the treatment of one gender if it will serve to promote gender equality in the long term. From the treatment of the subject (Ot.prp. No. 77 (2000-2001)) it is clear that the provisions were not gender neutral: "The right to differential treatment if it can promote equality should primarily be invoked to promote the position of women. This is a consequence of the wording 'in accordance with the statutory purposes'." This jurisdiction has been used in connection with the rules of equitable gender representation in public boards, councils and committees. That these means were particularly aimed at helping women, is also clear in Section 3 in the regulations pursuant to the Gender Equality Act Section 21:

"So that the goals of the law shall be achieved, the law requires § 1 a) that second level public authorities work actively and systematically for gender equality in all areas of society. Employers shall also work actively and systematically for gender equality within their workplace. Organisations within labour also have the same duty within their areas of influence and activity."

The Committee on Discrimination law, which examines all laws on discrimination, will evaluate the law's intent and whether or not the special emphasis on women's rights should still be fostered.

From 2002, all public authorities and other enterprises, who by law must prepare yearly reports, required to explain their actual situation with regards to gender equality, as well as put forth any planned or executed measures on this account. This requirement is known as the duty of accounting. This obligation encourages, but does not require, measures to better gender equality in the enterprise. Initiating measures would be appropriate in situations where either women or men are under-represented. The rules in this area are therefore gender neutral. Experience indicates however, that enterprises need to understand this initiative and use it to evaluate themselves when men are the underrepresented gender.

Today, Local Government Act, Public Limited Companies Act, Private Limited Companies Act (regarding the part of State owned companies) and State Corporation Act all have rules regarding equitable gender representation, which are motivated from a political will to get more women into public boards, committees and private boards. The intention is to ensure representation of both genders in important decision-making organs of society. This will help strengthen the democratic process. However, when the underlying motive is

to increase representation by women, it is also necessary to evaluate how these rules may have a negative impact on men, and if the means used in these cases should also be used in areas where men are underrepresented.

### 1.2.2 Other measures and what they mean for men

Authorities have used *economic means* to stimulate gender research, and especially research on women. Organisations that have worked with and for women, have received government support. In 1999, a constant government financial arrangement was established for crisis centres for women and children that were organised by volunteer organisations. Changes in the welfare system have been predominantly geared towards ensuring the same economic rights for women as for men. In 1992, the social security law was changed such that unpaid work in the home could give a woman right to pension points or additional rights to a pension on the level with salaried work. Before those changes, the policy was “equal rights or formal equality will lead to a favour of women.”

In certain professional areas, gender has been a focus, and gender has mainly meant “women”. A public committee set forth its viewpoint about “Women’s Health in Norway” in 1999. As a consequence of this view, a professorship has been established for women’s health, and a women’s health program has been founded under the Ministry of Health and care Services (later administered by the State health board). A national competency centre (according to the law on specialist health services) for women’s health was established in 2006.

There are parallels to this in other societal areas. In 2008, the first professorship for research on men was established at the Centre for Integrated Gender Research at the University in Oslo. The first three years the professorship will be financed by the Ministry of Children and Equality.

Many varied *pedagogical means* have also been used in the work towards gender equality. 1975 was declared the first “Women’s Year”. One of the results of this was the founding of “women’s universities”, which have been financed by state subsidies since 1984. These centres become the regional hubs of research and knowledge about women’s issues. The Resource Centre for Men (REFORM) received state funding from 2004 as the first resource centre of its kind for men and masculinity.

The authorities have enacted a number of campaigns and projects to influence the educational and career choices of girls/women and boys/men. Implicit in many of these projects is a woman’s perspective.

Through the use of authority instructions, authorities have introduced *organisational means* into the work for gender equality. One example of this is the Framework Plan for Content and Tasks of ECEC, where it is stated: “Gender equality shall be reflected in early childhood pedagogy. The institutions should raise children to meet and create a gender equal society.” Individual assessment and follow-up is today considered an expected practice in education, health services and social welfare services. These services are encouraged to have a gender perspective in order to meet equally boys and men, girls and women, with the background knowledge of what gender means for the user of these services.







