

# Gender balance and gender perspectives in research and innovation

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Policy for the Research Council of Norway  
2013–2017

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## About The Research Council of Norway

The Research Council of Norway is a national strategic and funding agency for research activities. The Council serves as a chief source of advice on and input into research policy for the Norwegian Government, the central government administration and the overall research community. Moreover, the Research Council works together with research institutions as well as the private and public sectors to enhance financial and quality targets in Norwegian

research and innovation activities. It is the task of the Research Council to identify Norway's research needs and recommend national priorities. The Council utilises specifically-targeted funding schemes to help translate national research policy goals into action. The Research Council provides a central meeting place for those who fund, carry out and utilise research and works activity to promote the internationalisation of Norwegian research.

# The Research Council will be a driving force

The Research Council has worked for many years to promote gender equality in research, gender perspectives in research and fundamental knowledge about gender. We seek to be a driving force in these areas, both nationally and internationally.

With regard to *gender balance*, we are especially concerned with accelerating the pace at which change is taking place in senior-level academic positions and research management. In Norway, the number of women and men earning doctoral degrees is the same. Yet even in areas where women constitute the majority of doctoral students, it is men who comprise the majority of those recruited to research careers in top positions.

In a research context, Norway is ranked at the top in Europe with regard to the proportion of women on boards and as leaders of institutions. But when it comes

to “grade A» / professorships, Norway lies just slightly below average. The loss of female research talent gives cause for concern for both Norwegian and international research.

Experience shows that introducing simple, concrete measures can lead to a substantial improvement in the gender composition. But to bring about a more sweeping change, leaders within the sector must play an active role.

In recent years the Research Council has introduced gender perspectives in research as a mandatory criterion in the assessment of grant applications. All of our programmes and initiatives must specifically assess what the gender dimension means for their particular knowledge field. If we are to succeed, we must raise the level of expertise among everyone involved. The aim is to enhance the overall quality of research.

Gender balance and gender perspectives also receive considerable attention in European research and innovation policy. We must aspire to become one of the leading countries in Europe in this area. Norway has all the prerequisites – culturally, economically and politically – to achieve this goal.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arvid Hallén".

Director General  
The Research Council of Norway



Photo: Shutterstock

The Research Council will work in a systematic, strategic and innovative manner to promote gender balance as well as gender perspectives in research. Activities will be based on cooperation with other actors, the application of internal measures and instruments and an assessment of the need for new initiatives.

*Gender balance* implies that both genders participate in research on an equal footing. The overall target is for an equal number of women and men to be active in all areas and at all levels. Loss of talent and biased recruitment is both a democratic challenge and an obstacle to

achieving the ambitious objectives set for Norwegian research.

*Gender as a perspective* implies that biological and social gender is reflected in research *content*. A growing number of studies show that diversity, including gender balance and gender perspectives, helps to enhance the scientific quality and social relevance of research.

Gender balance and gender perspectives also receive considerable attention in European research and innovation policy. They are key topics in the European Research Area (ERA) and are followed up in

a number of forums and initiatives. Norway takes an active part in these efforts.

The Research Council has worked for many years to promote gender equality in research, gender perspectives in research and fundamental knowledge about gender. The Research Council will strengthen these efforts by setting more specific, verifiable objectives.

These primary objectives will apply in general for both gender balance and gender perspectives, but will be specified and adapted to the various areas.

**1**

The Research Council will assume a greater national responsibility

**2**

The Research Council will work more systematically within its own administration of research funding

**3**

The Research Council will strengthen the knowledge base for use in research and innovation policy

# Gender balance in research and innovation

Good welfare schemes, a stated public gender equality policy and a high degree of gender equality in many areas of society all indicate that there should be satisfactory gender balance in Norwegian research. Norway is ranked at the top in Europe with regard to the proportion of female board members and leaders of institutions. Yet Norway lies slightly below the European average with regard to the overall proportion of women in research and is in tenth place in terms of the proportion of women in senior-level positions (She Figures 2012). The Research Council's aim is to strengthen Norway's position to become one of the leading countries in Europe in this area.

## Major differences

In recent decades the proportion of women recruited to research has increased dramatically. However, there are major differences among the various subject areas. While men comprise the vast majority of those at the master's and Ph.D. levels in some natural science and technology subjects, women dominate in medicine, health sciences and certain subject areas

within the humanities and social sciences. The gender imbalance in research also means that role models are unevenly distributed among subject areas, thus helping to maintain the difference in girls' and boys' educational choices.

Compared with the changes in recruitment (doctoral and post-doctoral) positions, the changes at the senior level of research have been minimal within all subject areas. The proportion of women at the professor level was slightly less than 25 per cent in 2012. This is due in part to the low proportion of women in the recruitment pool for top positions in some subject areas and in part to drop-out, especially by women in the career trajectory up to senior-level positions in all subject areas.

This is the greatest challenge with regard to gender balance in Norwegian research.

## Change is possible

In 2003 the Research Council launched the Centres of Excellence (SFF) scheme. The objective was to strengthen Norwegian

research by developing specialist research groups of high international quality. All of the centres ended up with male directors, and male researchers dominated at the junior and senior levels as well. When a new group of centres was established, emphasis was placed on gender balance. The proportion of research fellows and senior researchers who were women rose significantly.

The example from UiT The Arctic University of Norway also shows that change is possible. In 2002 UiT had the lowest figures of all the universities, with women comprising less than 10 per cent of the professors. Ten years later the proportion was close to 30 per cent, and thus the highest among Norwegian universities. Through targeted efforts, concrete measures and, not least, active leadership, the institution has achieved significant changes in relatively few years.

## The Research Council will do its part

The Research Council will take steps to ensure that its funding is not biased. This means that the gender distribution among



“When 40 per cent of your researchers at one level are women while only a little over 20 per cent at the next level up are, then you as a leader have a problem. We have to acknowledge and counter the effects of implicit bias. It's the responsibility of those in leadership positions to insure that career advancement is equally available to everyone, independent of sex.”

Curt Rice, professor of linguistics, UiT The Arctic University of Norway



## The promotion project at UiT The Arctic University of Norway

*In 2011 UiT The Arctic University of Norway launched an initiative known as the promotion project to increase the proportion of women in top positions. The project was based on the Norwegian scheme for personal promotion to professor level. In the course of a few years UiT had increased*

*the proportion of women professors at a faster rate than the other universities. The university set a target of 30 per cent women in senior-level positions over a two-year period. Department heads were asked to provide the names of candidates who they believed could acquire professor*

*qualifications by the end of 2013. One-on-one career meetings were held and offers of promotion were given which were adapted as far as possible to the individual's needs, such as mock evaluations and writing weeks. The project had the strong support of the university leadership.*



“Despite some advances in recent years, women in research remain a minority and a glass ceiling is in particular blocking women from top positions. This is a serious injustice and a scandalous waste of talent. The Commission is focused on fostering gender equality in our research programmes, and working to change a deeply-rooted institutional culture.”

Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science

## Centres of Excellence (SFF) scheme

*In 2003 the Research Council launched the Centres of Excellence (SFF) scheme. The objective was to strengthen Norwegian research by developing specialist research groups of high international quality. All of the centres ended up with male directors, and male researchers dominated at the junior and senior levels as well.*

*When a new group of centres was established five years later, emphasis was placed on gender balance in the grant applications, and applicants were requested to give a detailed description of how they would work to recruit women and promote career*

*development for female researchers. An earmarked sum was set aside to encourage the centres to implement active measures.*

*The impact was pronounced. The Research Council received a greater number of applications with women centre directors. The proportion of female research fellows increased from 35 per cent for the first group of centres to 53 per cent at the new centres. At the post-doctoral level the proportion rose from 27 per cent to 44 per cent, and among senior-level researchers from 17 per cent to 23 per cent.*

> project managers and senior researchers in projects must not be more imbalanced than the recruitment pool. Additionally, the Research Council will work proactively to improve gender balance in all parts of the research sector: universities and university colleges, independent research institutes, health trusts, and trade and industry.

This will be accomplished by providing input to the ministries, engaging in dialogue with the sector and cooperating with the Committee for Gender Balance in Research (the KIF Committee) appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research. Funding must be more consciously designed to promote women's participation at higher levels of research. Increasing the proportion of women among project managers and senior researchers in projects funded by the Research Council will contribute to this.

## Special challenges

The challenges are especially great in three areas of the Research Council's activities: excellence in research initiatives, internationalisation measures and industry-oriented measures. In these areas the proportion of women among project managers and key researchers in large-scale projects is considerably lower than the average.

New *excellence in research initiatives*, such as the new centre initiatives, must follow up the valuable experiences and good results from the Centres of Excellence (SFF) scheme.

The proportion of women among Norwegian project managers under the EU Seventh Framework Programme for Research is lower than the European average. Measures to promote *internationalisation* must have as a goal to increase the proportion of female project managers in internation-

ally targeted programmes and EU-funded projects.

*Trade and industry* has the most uneven gender distribution in all parts of the research system, with women comprising a total of 21 per cent of the research personnel (2012). No systematic statistics have been compiled on research management in trade and industry broken down by gender. The Research Council will cooperate with Innovation Norway, Siva – the Industrial Development Cooperation of Norway and others to learn more about the situation and to improve the gender balance.

## Innovative measures

To encourage more rapid improvement in the gender balance at the senior level in Norwegian research, the Research Council has established the Programme on Gender Balance in Senior Positions and Research Management (BALANSE).

> The BALANSE programme enables the Research Council to provide funding for innovative measures to improve the gender balance and thereby have a nationwide impact. The BALANSE programme will also foster mutual learning between research environments. The programme will provide support to and strengthen the efforts of the research institutions and research environments in this area. The programme is based on three areas of activity: BALANSE projects, a national learning arena, and knowledge development and new research on the processes that promote and obstruct gender balance.

A joint Nordic or European initiative may be beneficial by increasing the volume and strengthening the quality of this research.

### The BALANSE programme is underway

*The Research Council established the Programme on Gender Balance in Senior Positions and Research Management (BALANSE) in 2013.*

*The primary objective is to promote gender balance at the senior level in Norwegian research and to strengthen structural and cultural renewal of the underlying research system. This objective will be achieved through:*

- > Knowledge development and knowledge sharing;
- > Better research management;
- > Career development measures.

*The BALANSE programme will serve as a national learning arena, provide support to the research institutions' own efforts and develop a gender equality toolkit for use within the sector.*



Photo: Sverre Jarlid

**1**

**The Research Council will assume a greater national responsibility for achieving gender balance in all parts of the research sector**

*The Research Council will:*

- > engage in active dialogue with the Committee for Gender Balance in Research (the KIF Committee) and the sector at large to discuss challenges and design measures to achieve more rapid improvement in gender balance in research;
- > give the topic of gender balance a more prominent role in budget input and other input to the ministries;
- > highlight the topic of gender balance in communication targeted towards the general public;
- > use the BALANSE programme to strengthen the efforts of research institutions;
- > work to help Norway take on a leading role in this field internationally in Horizon 2020, in the development of the European Research Area (ERA) and in Science Europe.

**2**

**The Research Council will work more systematically to promote gender balance within its own administration of research funding**

*The Research Council will:*

- > assess the impact of all its forms of funding on gender balance;
- > introduce special measures to promote gender balance within excellence in research instruments, internationalisation and research in trade and industry;
- > use the BALANSE programme in interaction with other programmes;
- > increase the proportion of female project managers and women in key academic positions and set a target of over 40 per cent women in such positions for new projects by 2017;
- > apply moderate gender quotas in the distribution of research funding

**3**

**The Research Council will strengthen the knowledge base on gender balance for use in research and innovation policy**

*The Research Council will:*

- > further develop the knowledge base in areas with significant knowledge gaps on gender balance;
- > initiate Nordic and European research cooperation to generate more knowledge about gender equality challenges in research;
- > participate actively in international forums to promote, systematise and share knowledge at the European level;
- > incorporate gender balance into analyses of the Research Council's funding activities.

# Gender perspectives in research and innovation

A diversity of entry points and perspectives in research strengthen the quality of knowledge production, the relevance of research and the ability of society to innovate. Gender perspectives are an important aspect of this diversity. Society is comprised of women and men with biological, social and cultural differences, and sound research must reflect this.

Research generates knowledge that serves as the basis for social development, policy formulation and the development of services and products. It is crucial that this knowledge benefits all individuals in society, regardless of gender.

## New ideas

Innovation processes are dependent on a rich assortment of ideas and perspectives to meet various needs. Both in ERA and Horizon 2020 it has been pointed out that gender perspectives are not a sufficiently integral part of research and innovation. This applies in Norway as well. Integrating gender perspectives into innovation activities will pave the way for new opportunities and better results.

## Better results

The Research Council will work to ensure that gender is integrated as a perspective in all the research it funds, when this is

relevant. This means that all programmes and initiatives must specifically assess what the gender dimension means for their particular knowledge domain.

Gender as a perspective may be manifested in the research questions raised and the theoretical approaches and methods used. This means that both genders must be represented in the groups being studied, and consideration must be given to whether the significance of the research results will be different for women and men.

Gender as a perspective spans a wide range from gender as a variable in

## Gendered Innovations

*“Thirty years of research have revealed that sex and gender bias is socially harmful and expensive. Gender bias also leads to missed market opportunities.*

*In basic research, failing to use appropriate samples of male and female cells, tissues, and animals yields faulty results. In medicine, not recognising osteoporosis as a male disease delays diagnosis and treatment in men.*

*It is crucially important to identify gender bias and understand how it operates*

*in science and technology. Gendered Innovations offer sophisticated methods of sex and gender analysis to scientists and engineers. Integrating these methods into basic and applied research produces excellence in science, health and medicine, and engineering research, policy, and practice.”*

Londa Schiebinger, Professor, Stanford University, USA, Dr Schiebinger heads the project “Gendered Innovations” at Stanford.  
[genderedinnovations.stanford.edu](http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu)





Photo: Sverre Jarlid

research, via gender as one of several key perspectives, to gender as the main theoretical or empirical focus.

Gender research projects are increasingly being funded through the Research Council's open arenas, thematically oriented programmes and other types of initiatives. Research institutions have an ongoing responsibility to maintain gender research as a separate field of knowledge, and the

Research Council will follow developments in this area.

### **Mandatory criterion**

In recent years the Research Council has introduced gender perspectives in research as a mandatory criterion in the assessment of grant applications. In order for this measure to be effective, it is necessary to increase awareness and competence within the Research Council

administration and among those who assess grant applications.

To succeed in achieving broad-based integration, the responsibility for this must be clearly defined within the organisation. The Research Council will follow up the policy by establishing operational targets with clear leadership responsibility and report on the performance within its own activities.



Photo: Sverre Jarlid

**1**

**The Research Council will assume a greater national responsibility for promoting gender perspectives in research and innovation**

*The Research Council will:*

- › establish a national meeting place on gender perspectives in research between basic gender research, other research fields and across disciplines;
- › draw on gender research when developing subject field strategies and evaluations;
- › include discussions of gender perspectives in research policy input related to government white papers, national strategies, institutional strategies, the development of international research initiatives, etc.;
- › incorporate gender perspectives in the Research Council's dialogue with research institutions;
- › integrate gender perspectives in Norway's participation in the EU framework programmes and international funding instruments.

**2**

**The Research Council will work more systematically to promote gender perspectives within its own administration of research funding**

*The Research Council will:*

- › assess the significance of gender perspectives in the development and programmes and activities;
- › introduce annual division-based reporting on efforts related to gender perspectives in programmes and activities;
- › strengthen gender perspectives in selected priority areas;
- › assess the relevance of gender perspectives in all application assessment;
- › implement competence-building measures for the administration and programme boards in various thematic and subject areas;
- › take the initiative to strengthen policy-oriented research on gender equality challenges in society.

**3**

**The Research Council will strengthen the knowledge base on gender perspectives for use in research and innovation policy**

*The Research Council will:*

- › evaluate the capacity and quality of gender research in Norway with a view to developing this research field;
- › include analyses of gender perspectives in the Research Council's annual reports.







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