

Work programme
2017-2022

**Programme on Gender Balance in Senior Positions and
Research Management (BALANSE)**

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Norges forskningsråd

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1 Summary

Recruitment to research has been satisfactory for both genders for many years. Women currently comprise the majority of students and research fellows and almost half of the permanent academic staff. Nevertheless, in 2016 only 27 per cent of all professors at Norway's universities and university colleges were women. Even in fields where women make up the majority of doctoral research fellows, more men are recruited to senior-level positions in research. The BALANSE programme is the Research Council of Norway's initiative to help to rectify this situation.

The *Programme on Gender Balance in Senior Positions and Research Management (BALANSE)* is a policy-oriented programme at the Research Council with a ten-year programme period (2012–2022). The main objective of the programme is to promote gender equality and gender balance in Norwegian research. The programme will help to bring about structural and cultural change in the research system through new knowledge, learning and innovative measures. Gender equality in research involves a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities and cultivating talent from the entire population. A more equitable research system is also a better, more robust research system. What is ultimately at stake here is democracy, sustainability and ethics. Gender balance in research also concerns who will be setting the agenda for research and social development in the years to come.

It is becoming increasingly clear that gender imbalance is not a problem that will automatically right itself and that measures are therefore needed to address it. The Research Council's BALANSE programme is a response to this. The programme will help to improve gender balance in Norwegian research by facilitating the efforts of research institutions to promote gender equality in research and research management and supporting structural and cultural change at these institutions. The BALANSE programme seeks to be a national learning arena and is developing a toolkit for gender equality measures in the research sector. The objective of the programme will be achieved through three main areas of activity:

- BALANSE projects;
- Knowledge development and new research;
- National learning arena.

BALANSE funding may be sought by universities, university colleges, research institutes, and research-intensive trade and industry. The programme is targeted towards research institutions, not individual researchers.

2 Background and challenges

2.1 Background

Norway is regarded around the world as a leader in gender equality. However, the proportion of women in senior academic positions remains strikingly low. Although women currently comprise the majority of students and research fellows and almost half of the academic staff, this proportion drops dramatically moving upward in the position hierarchy. In 2017, only one-fourth of all professors in Norway are women. In this respect, the gender imbalance in the research system represents a lag in the country's social development and an outdated gendered power distribution. Compared with other countries, Norway has a relatively large number of full professors among the academic staff, in part because Norwegian higher education institutions employ a scheme which allows individuals to seek personal promotion to the professor level. Given the distinctive features of the Norwegian position structure, relatively generous parental leave, the widespread availability of childcare, and gender equality policy in general, the proportion of women at the senior level is paradoxically low. There is a need for more knowledge about the underlying mechanisms here, as well as about active measures that can be implemented to promote more balanced recruitment.

Male dominance at the senior level in Norwegian research may be explained by historical factors and a culture of competition that does not function in the same way for both genders. It was long thought that it was just a question of time before the gender imbalance would automatically right itself if there were a sufficient number of women candidates. Statistics show, however, that this is not the case. The current imbalance is not solely due to previous employment practices, and developments here are moving more slowly than developments at the doctoral level.

History shows that gender equality is not something that evolves on its own, but is dependent on drivers to move it forward. The gender imbalance is a systemic challenge that the institutions cannot solve individually. The BALANSE programme provides incentives to institutions to take on greater responsibility for improving gender balance.

In Norway, there is widespread trust in research and its ambitions regarding objectivity. For this reason, there may perhaps be too much confidence that the research system operates with equal career opportunities and fair employment practices. Research shows that men are often favoured, in fact, and that this can only be explained by implicit bias. A study conducted at Yale University in the US shows that researchers at all levels, and of both genders, have a greater likelihood of hiring, supervising and offering a higher salary to a man than to a woman. In the well-known “John vs. Jennifer” study, (Moss-Rascusin 2012), professors were sent identical applications on which half had a man’s name (John) and half had a woman’s name (Jennifer). The professors were asked to assess how competent the candidate was, how likely it was that they would hire the person in question, and how much they would pay. The results showed that male applicants scored better on all counts. Such gender stereotypes and implicit bias are at odds with the image that science has of itself as well as its overall ambitions to be objective.

It has also been pointed out that a better gender balance will lead to more research that incorporates gender perspectives and, vice versa, that more research incorporating gender perspectives will lead to a better gender balance. What comprises gender perspectives in research will, of course, vary from discipline to discipline.

Biased recruitment at the senior level and in research management is a common pattern internationally as well. Norwegian figures on gender distribution correspond with the EU average at both higher and lower position levels.

Norway is regarded around the world as a leader in gender equality. The persistent gender imbalance in the position hierarchy is not in keeping with this perception. While Norway and Europe have similar figures in terms of the proportion of women on the boards of institutions, Norway ranks as low as tenth place with regard to senior-level positions in research (She Figures 2015).

The lack of gender equality between women and men in academia has ramifications for individuals, the research system and society at large. At the individual level it affects students and individual researchers. At the systemic level it affects research institutions, the Research Council of Norway, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, and the European and international research system of which Norway is a part. At the societal level the lack of gender equality in research has ramifications for everyone in society, in principle, but the impacts are likely to be most negative for children and adolescents. A skewed gender balance or male dominance can influence the substance of the research and lead to gendered science, e.g. that science is viewed as being more masculine than feminine. Norwegian research must mirror the population as a whole and must incorporate the experiences and views of men and women alike. Gender balance among researchers plays a role in research content and research perspectives, as well as for the career opportunities and work environments of researchers. Women and men must be given equal opportunities to participate in research and equal access to important, attractive jobs. Gender balance is also important in terms of the signals sent to the coming generation. Gender equality involves a (more) equitable distribution of resources and opportunities between women and men. Academic stature and reputation are resources that may be decisive in the keen competition for funding and prestigious positions.

The responsibility for developing the research sector is shared by many: makers of research policy, the public administration, the Research Council and the research institutions themselves. Selection and

promotion committees also wield considerable power in actual employment processes. Greater awareness of the issues and more knowledge about the underlying factors that promote or obstruct equitable career development are essential. More knowledge about these will in turn enhance science's understanding of itself.

Major structural changes currently taking place in the research sector today with regard to internationalisation, excellence, mobility, mergers, etc. have an impact on gender balance. It is important to obtain better insight into what these processes are and what they entail. Similarly, globalisation and internationalisation may pose a challenge to gender equality efforts in Norway. International applicants for positions in Norway are making competition even tougher. It is important to be aware of challenges that may emerge as a result of this.

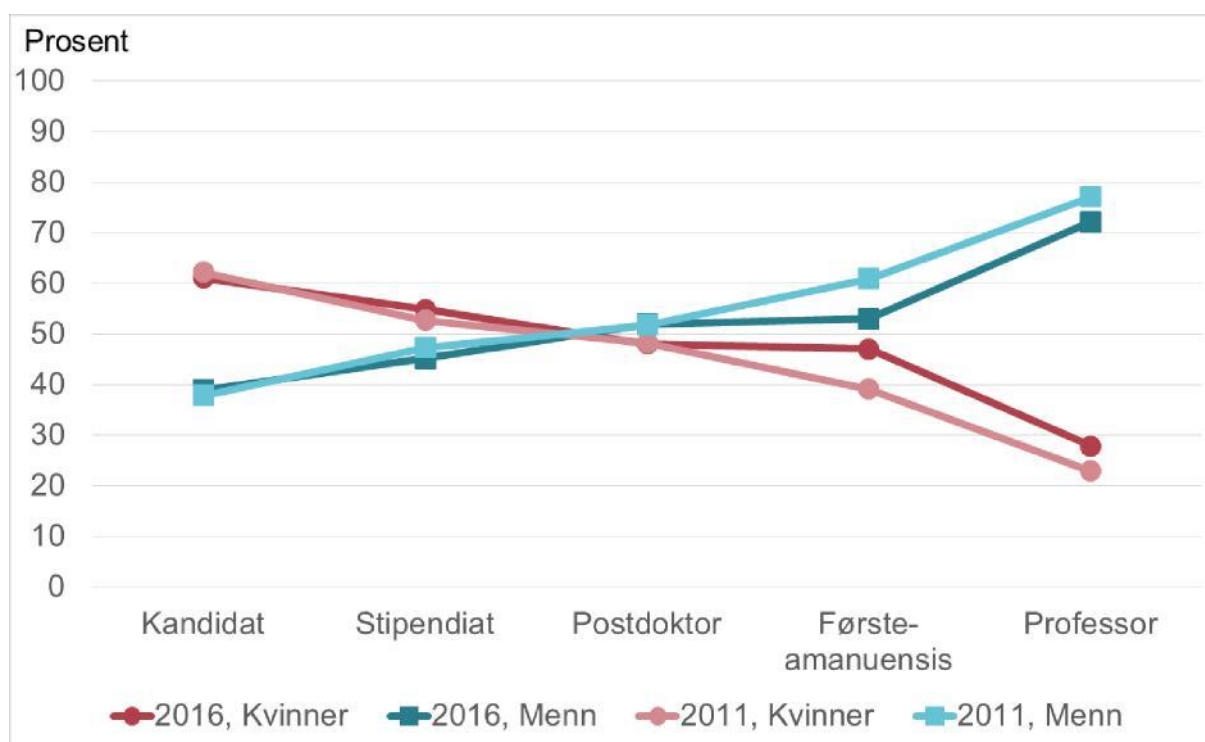
2.2 State-of-the-art for knowledge

In recent years, the rhetoric has shifted from “fixing the women” to “fixing the system”. Measures have been targeted towards women for several decades without having the desired effect. Barriers remain and development is still slow-paced. A number of measures targeted towards individuals appear to have had a short-term effect but little impact on the system in the long term. Recognising that the problem does not lie with the women but with the system, the BALANSE programme will be focusing its activities on achieving organisational change and cultural and structural renewal in research institutions. The BALANSE programme is a system-oriented programme of measures aimed at change, that generates knowledge underway and has significant scope for promoting flexibility and innovation. The programme is process-oriented and targeted towards innovation in the public sector. Better management and more active involvement of management in gender equality efforts will be critical to achieving this.

The programme will also help to develop knowledge about the formal and informal structures of the research system, about leadership and about the effects and side-effects of measures. This will be done through research, analyses and testing of measures.

The graph below illustrates the highly imbalanced distribution of women and men at various rungs of the career ladder at universities and university colleges in Norway. Developments from 2011 to 2016 show that the proportion of women in associate professor positions is approaching the proportion of men, while minimal progress has been made at the professor level.

Graph: Women and men at various rungs of the career ladder at universities and university colleges in Norway in 2011 and 2016



Source: Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education/Database for Statistics on Higher Education

Prosent	Percentage
Kandidat	Candidate
Stipendiat	Doctoral research fellow
Postdoktor	Post-doctoral research fellow
Første-amanuensis	Associate professor
Professor	Professor
Kvinner	Women
Menn	Men

2.3 Experiences from the BALANSE programme

Experiences from the BALANSE programme thus far indicate that increased awareness of gender balance can in and of itself have a positive effect. Simply writing a grant application for the BALANSE programme may help to raise awareness at an institution. BALANSE projects report that having funding from the Research Council enhances the legitimacy of activities to promote gender equality. Experience also shows that measures must be tailored to the institution in which they will be implemented. Many ongoing projects report that the involvement of the management is essential to successful implementation of gender equality measures.

A report authored by researchers affiliated with the BALANSE project at the University of Bergen points out that the current situation of increased production of doctoral candidates combined with few available permanent positions is leading to an accumulation of candidates in the recruitment segment, which in turn is leading to queues and increased competition. The number of candidates with relatively equal qualifications has grown and keen competition between equally qualified candidates is putting pressure on the selection process. Other types of assessments therefore play a more important role in hiring. The definition of what constitutes academic qualifications has become more fluid and vague. Unclear expectations about what is needed to succeed appears to have a particularly negative and

unfavourable outcome for women. Increased competition also has an impact on the work environment and the type of research being conducted.¹

3 Objectives for the programme

The programme seeks to promote gender equality and gender balance in Norwegian research, with particular focus on increasing the proportion of women in senior academic and research management positions. The programme will help to bring about structural and cultural change in the research system to facilitate this.

3.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of the programme is to support cultural and structural renewal in the research system to promote gender equality and a sustainable research system. This may entail, for example, changing organisational structures and practices or removing institutional barriers that lead to direct or indirect discriminatory treatment. The programme will also work to achieve greater career path equality for women and men.

The primary objective will be achieved by:

- **Strengthening** the efforts of research institutions to promote gender equality and gender balance;
- **Encouraging** greater knowledge about and awareness of gender imbalance;
- **Funding** measures and research in this field.

Greater knowledge and awareness about the challenges linked to gender balance will be critical, as are a commitment to addressing the problem and a willingness on the part of managers to make changes and set priorities. A key aim of the programme is to raise the awareness of research managers about their role in recognising, developing and recruiting talented women researchers. Better gender balance requires active leadership and management strategies.

The programme will award funding to projects targeted towards structural and cultural renewal and to projects addressing research management. The programme encourages experimental and innovative measures. A long-term aim of the programme is for the implemented measures to have a lasting impact and for the institutions themselves to take on greater responsibility. Renewal of the research system will contribute to value creation in Norwegian research.

3.2 Secondary objectives

To achieve the objective of a larger proportion of women in senior academic and research management positions, it is crucial to raise awareness and generate knowledge about the importance of gender balance and the factors that promote or obstruct it. Knowledge sharing is just as important as knowledge development. The programme seeks to become a national supplier of knowledge about gender equality measures in research and research management. A “toolkit” is being developed based on experiences from BALANSE projects and is designed for use by all participants in the research sector.

There is a need for research on, and analyses of, institutional and cultural barriers, the system’s formal and informal structures, leadership and the importance of management. There is also a need for comparative knowledge about barriers across disciplines and institutions. Likewise, there is a need for research on, and analyses of, implemented measures and their effects, as well as knowledge about which measures work and which do not.

¹ Gry Brandser and Sevil Sümer: *Farefull ferd mot toppen. Kjønnbalanse i forskning og forskningsledelse ved forsknings- og utdanningsinstitusjoner i Bergen* [Perilous journey to the top. Gender balance in research and research management at research and educational institutions in Bergen]. Uni Research Rokkan Centre’s publication series.

The BALANSE programme seeks to become a national learning arena, and meeting places and communication activities will play an important role in this context. The programme will attach great importance to developing meeting places between the projects awarded funding and between these projects and other users. The programme will disseminate knowledge about the meaning of gender balance as well as about instruments that can be used to achieve it. Activities will also draw attention to relevant research questions that are closely related to the programme's thematic priority areas and overall area of responsibility. Meeting places and communication activities are vital for transfer and sharing of the knowledge and research findings generated under the programme. Gatherings, seminars and workshops will be key meeting places in this context. The programme will put together a comprehensive programme of seminars.

Promoting organisational development and new forms of management is another secondary objective of the programme. In a long-term perspective, measures targeting women will not be the most expedient way of achieving gender balance. It is not women that must be changed, it is the system. The aim is for the organisations themselves to take responsibility for these developments in the future so that the BALANSE programme will ultimately become redundant, just as the ultimate aim of feminism is to eradicate the need for it.

4 Thematic and scientific priorities

4.1 Thematic breadth and focus

The BALANSE programme is based on three main areas of activity:

- BALANSE projects;
- National learning arena;
- Knowledge development and new research.

BALANSE projects

The objective of BALANSE projects is to promote the efforts of research institutions to improve gender balance in research. Facilitating career development is one of many important requirements for success. Experience shows that a systematic, strategic approach is critical. BALANSE projects must have their basis in the institutions' own internal strategies and help the institutions to achieve their gender equality objectives.

National learning arena

The BALANSE programme will establish a learning arena at the programme level with two main target groups: leaders in the research sector and participants in the projects. The programme will organise gatherings for sharing knowledge and experience, raising awareness, building networks and providing information. Some measures will be targeted specifically towards one of the target groups, while some events will include both groups and be open to other interested parties.

Knowledge development and new research

Part of the objective of the BALANSE programme is to encourage knowledge development and new research. There is a need for more knowledge about the underlying structural and cultural processes that promote or obstruct gender balance in research.

4.2 Sustainability

Improved gender balance will lead to a more equitable research system and ensure that society can benefit from research expertise from the entire population. This will result in a better, more robust research system. What is ultimately at stake here is democracy, sustainability and ethics. In this context the term sustainability is to be understood as reduced social inequality in society and a component of the contract of trust between society at large and the research community.

4.3 EU framework programme

Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue under the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020. The H2020 strategy on gender equality has three underlying objectives: fostering gender balance in research teams; ensuring gender balance in decision-making positions; and integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation. Among other things, all H2020 calls have a specific item in which applicants are asked to describe gender balance in the project. Gender Equality is also one of six policy keys for Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), in addition to Ethics, Governance, Open Access, Public Engagement and Science Education. Good gender balance in Norwegian research teams is vital to success in the competition for EU funding.

5 Priorities for structuring the research effort

5.1 International cooperation

5.1.1 The Nordic countries

The BALANSE programme was a driving force behind the establishment of a joint Nordic research programme under the auspices of NordForsk, Gender in the Nordic Research and Innovation Area, and contributes NOK 10 million annually to the programme budget. NOK 50 million in funding for two Nordic Centres of Excellence was announced under a call for proposals entitled “Solving the gender paradox” with a deadline of spring 2016. Funding was awarded to two projects, one of which is Norwegian-led.

5.1.2 Europe

The BALANSE programme participated in the EU-funded network Promoting Gender Equality in Research Institutions and Integration of the Gender Dimension in Research Contents (GENDER-NET ERA-NET), which was concluded in autumn 2016. The Research Council was a partner in GENDER-NET via the BALANSE programme. A continuation of the network in the form of an ERA-NET Cofund was launched in autumn 2017.

Considerable focus is placed on gender balance and gender perspectives in European research and innovation policy. They are key topics in the European Commission’s plans for realising 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’s *Policy for gender equality and gender perspectives in research (2013–2017)* states that Norway is to play a leading international role in promoting gender balance in research and innovation.

In practice, Norway is about average in Europe in terms of gender balance and integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation. The gender distribution in internationalisation instruments at the Research Council is especially imbalanced, with a lower proportion of women among project managers than the average in Europe. The BALANSE programme seeks to provide effective measures for changing this.

5.2 Internationalisation

Norway has been a driving force in promoting gender equality internationally. Nevertheless, the proportion of Norwegian women in international research cooperation has been low, also in comparison with other countries. The BALANSE programme follows up the Norwegian Government’s *Strategy for Research and Innovation Cooperation with the EU*, which states that “all incentive systems to promote participation in the EU cooperation shall be designed to promote gender balance”. The strategy also identifies the need to target mobilisation efforts towards women in order to increase the proportion of women participating in Horizon 2020 and achieve the objectives of the European Research Area (ERA). One of Norway’s research policy objectives is to increase the proportion of Norwegian women in international research projects. The BALANSE programme has launched specific measures to this end.

5.3 Communication and dissemination activities

One of the main aims of the BALANSE programme is to promote learning from the measures that have been implemented, and communication and dialogue about these measures is therefore of great importance.

Communication and dissemination activities will play an important role in the effort to become a national learning arena. The programme attaches great importance to developing meeting places and other communication between the projects funded under the programme and between these projects and other users. The programme seeks to disseminate knowledge about the meaning of gender balance as well as about instruments that can be used to achieve it. Prioritised instruments for communication activities are:

- Meeting places;
- Toolkit;
- Newsletter;
- Webpages;
- Publications.

The programme will also encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among BALANSE projects and between BALANSE projects and other Research Council projects and programmes.

5.4 Types of support

The BALANSE programme will primarily fund measures/projects with a three-year timeframe. For the individual project, the applicant institution must describe what it believes to be the institution's main structural and cultural challenges. A good analysis of these challenges will be a key criterion in the decision to award project funding. The applicant must show how the project will address these challenges through the development of new initiatives involving the management. This also entails viewing the challenges and measures in light of research in this field. Specific measures must be targeted towards changing the management's thinking. Projects demonstrating innovative thinking will be viewed in a positive light. Research and knowledge development must be incorporated into the projects. All projects should include a plan for dissemination, knowledge sharing and evaluation.

The BALANSE programme is relevant for researchers and research managers throughout the entire research and innovation chain. The programme is also relevant for research administration and policy development as well as for interested parties in other countries.

6 Cooperation with related instruments

The BALANSE programme is highly ambitious, but has a limited level of activity. The programme aims to exert influence across the entire research system. There are no limitations with regard to disciplines or subject areas, and the scope of the programme extends to the entire research sector. Cooperation with a wide array of Research Council programmes may significantly enhance the impact of the BALANSE programme.

7 Anticipated results, impacts and societal outcomes

Norway will have a stronger standing both nationally and internationally if the country succeeds in becoming a more inclusive and diverse society where both genders have equal opportunities to pursue a career in research and to shape the content and direction of the research conducted. Senior-level academic positions bestow individuals with considerable power and potential to influence the topics studied, scientific development, resource distribution and recruitment of employees.

The BALANSE programme is a policy-oriented programme that aspires to help to create a well-functioning, more gender-balanced research system.

7.1 Results

The programme will fund activities and set priorities that lead to a wide range of results. Research, evaluations and summaries of experiences will yield results in the form of reports and publications. Experiences from projects funded under the BALANSE programme will be compiled in a digital toolkit that can be used by all participants in the research sector. The toolkit will contain information about effective (and ineffective) measures and how to launch and evaluate various types of measures. This toolkit will be one of the most important results of the programme.

Changes in organisational and leadership practices will be an important result of efforts within the organisations. Research shows that pursuing structural change is the most effective and expedient way of ensuring a lasting impact for gender equality measures in academia.

Additional indicators for quantifying the impacts of the programme's funding of measures and research include:

- Number of institutions engaged in efforts to improve the gender balance at their institution (may be found in policy and practice);
- Number of leaders who actively front the issue within their institution and in the public debate;
- The incorporation of gender quality and gender balance issues as an important component of leadership training and development at universities, university colleges and research institutes;
- Number of reports, analyses and publications.

7.2 Impacts

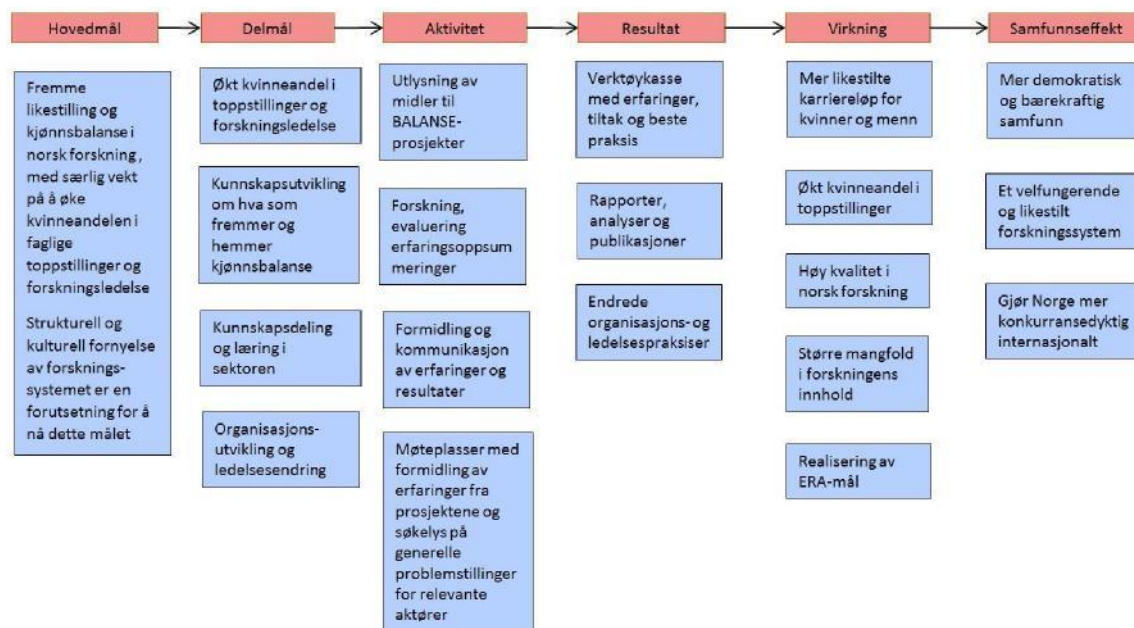
Gender balance is critical for the quality and relevance to society of research and for the competitiveness of research groups.

Anticipated impacts of the programme include:

- Greater career path equality for women and men;
- Higher proportion of women in senior academic and research management positions;
- Higher proportion of women researchers participating in international research cooperation;
- Higher quality in Norwegian research;
- Greater diversity in research content;
- Realisation of ERA objectives;
- A stronger Norwegian research community which is more competitive internationally, particularly in the EU.

7.3 Societal outcomes

A well-functioning, gender-balanced research system will help to create a more democratic and sustainable society. It will also help to better equip the Norwegian research community for the future, enhance the legitimacy of Norwegian research among the population and in that respect increase value creation in Norway. It will make Norway more competitive internationally as well.



Hovedmål	Primary objective
Fremme likestilling og kjønnsbalanse i norsk forskning, med særlig vekt på å øke kvinneandelen i faglige toppstillinger og forskningsledelse	Promote gender equality and gender balance in Norwegian research, with particular focus on increasing the proportion of women in senior academic and research management positions.
Strukturell og kulturell fornyelse av forskningssystemet er en forutsetning for å nå dette målet	Bring about structural and cultural renewal of the research system to facilitate this.
Delmål	Secondary objectives
Økt kvinneandel i toppstillinger og forskningsledelse	Increase the proportion of women in senior academic and research management positions.
Kunnskapsutvikling om hva som fremmer og hemmer kjønnsbalanse	Develop knowledge about the factors that promote or obstruct gender balance.
Kunnskapsdeling og læring i sektoren	Promote knowledge sharing and learning in the sector.
Organisasjonsutvikling og ledelsesendring	Encourage organisational development and new forms of management.
Aktivitet	Activities
Utlysning av midler til BALANSE-prosjekter	Funding announcements for BALANSE projects.
Forskning, evaluering, erfaringsoppsummeringer	Research, evaluations and summaries of experiences.
Formidling og kommunikasjon av erfaringer og resultater	Dissemination and communication of experiences and results.
Møteplasser med formidling av erfaringer fra prosjektene og søkelys på generelle problemstillinger for relevante aktører	Meeting places for disseminating experiences from the projects and focus on general problems facing relevant participants.
Resultat	Results
Verktøykasse med erfaringer, tiltak og beste praksis	Toolkit containing experiences, measures and best practices.

Rapporter, analyser og publikasjoner	Reports, analyses and publications.
Endrede organisasjons- og ledelsespraksiser	Changes in organisational and leadership practices.
Virkning	Impacts
Mer likestilte karriereløp for kvinner og menn	Greater career path equality for women and men.
Økt kvinneandel i toppstillinger	Higher proportion of women in senior academic positions.
Høy kvalitet i norsk forskning	Higher quality in Norwegian research.
Større mangfold i forskningens innhold	Greater diversity in research content.
Realisering av ERA-mål	Realisation of ERA objectives.
Samfunnseffekt	Societal outcomes
Mer demokratisk og bærekraftig samfunn	A more democratic and sustainable society.
Et velfungerende og likestilt forskningssystem	A well-functioning, gender-balanced research system.
Gjør Norge mer konkurransedyktig internasjonalt	Make Norway more competitive internationally.

8 Resources and budget

The BALANSE programme is funded by annual allocations from the Ministry of Education and Research.

The budget for the programme for the period 2012–2022 is estimated at roughly NOK 158 million, contingent on the size of the ministry's allocations from year to year. Allocations to the programme increased from NOK 12 million in 2015 to NOK 18 million in 2017, following a decision by the Executive Board of the Research Council to increase the allocation.

In the period 2012–2016, the BALANSE programme board awarded a total of NOK 44 million to 11 BALANSE projects and NOK 10 million to research cooperation under the auspices of NordForsk.

9 Organisation

Programme board

The overall responsibility for the programme lies with the Division for Society and Health, which has appointed the BALANSE programme board. The programme board administers the programme on behalf of the Research Council and is organised under and reports to the division research board. The programme board's tasks are primarily strategic in nature. The programme board is charged with ensuring that the programme meets its designated objectives and that activities and funding announcements are implemented as effectively as possible in accordance with the work programme and other stipulated plans and within the parameters approved by the division research board. The programme board was appointed by the Research Board of the Division for Society and Health in December 2016 for the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2020. The programme board is comprised of the following nine members:

- Knut Liestøl, Professor, University of Oslo (chair)
- Gry Alsos, Professor, Nord University Business School
- Tor Grande, Professor, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- Ingrid Guldvik, Dean, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences
- Kristin Halvorsen, Director, CICERO Center for International Climate Research

- Erik Litborn, Programme Manager, VINNOVA, Sweden
- Ulf Sverdrup, Director, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)
- Mari Teigen, Research Professor, Institute for Social Research
- Thomas Michael Walle, Senior Curator, Museums of Sogn and Fjordane

Programme administration

- Ingeborg W. Owesen, Senior Adviser (Programme Coordinator)
- Lise Christensen, Special Adviser
- Eva Grøttland, Adviser

Programme address

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