

# The Secretary-General Report on Women in Development 2019 – contribution from Norway

## 1. Gender perspective in national strategies

### *Question*

• Integrating a gender perspective in national sustainable development policies and strategies (operative paragraphs 2, 5, 50 and 60);

### **1.1 Sector responsibility and duty of public authorities to promote equality**

Each ministry has a responsibility for promoting equality within its sector. The administration of Norway is organized in such a way that individual sectoral ministries are responsible for services and policies aimed at the entire population. The authorities in the various sectors and at different administrative levels have the same responsibility for women as for men within their purviews. This principle of sectoral responsibility places responsibilities in the same place as the policy instruments. This means that equality considerations are included in the assessments made throughout the administration. The individual Government authority shall, within its purview, monitor the situation and study consequences for women and men alike. According to the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, public authorities shall make active, targeted and systematic efforts to achieve the purpose of the Act. The purpose of the Act is to promote equality and prevent discrimination on the basis of gender, pregnancy, leave in connection with childbirth or adoption, care responsibilities, ethnicity, religion, belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age or other significant characteristics of a person.

### **1.2 Instructions for official studies and reports**

The Norwegian Instructions for Official Studies set mandatory requirements for the preparation of central government measures (i.a. budget measures and legislative amendments).

Section 2-1 of the Instructions states that all studies shall consider “Which fundamental questions are raised by the measures?”. The guidelines to the Instructions specify that fundamental questions of equal opportunities/ discrimination shall be assessed if relevant. All fundamental questions need to be presented systematically and examined comprehensively.

Section 3-2 in the Norwegian Instructions for Official Studies states that “The ministry in charge shall present all proposed measures with major effects to affected ministries.” If there are anticipated major effects regarding equal opportunities/ discrimination, the assessment of the measure shall be presented to the Ministry of Culture prior to public consultations.

The Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs has been given the task to develop an updated guidance document to The Norwegian Instructions for Official Studies, that explains and specifies the requirements for assessing possibilities for equal opportunities/discrimination in the preparation of central government measures.

## **2. Gender segregated labour market**

### ***Questions:***

- Promoting active labour market policies on full and productive employment and decent work for women, eliminating gender-based discrimination in labour markets and enacting and enforcing minimum wages (operative paragraphs 23, 25, 28 and 29);

- Eliminating gender-based occupational segregation and gender wage gaps, and improving recruitment, retention and promotion policies for women (operative paragraphs 25, 29, 31 and 48);

Compared with many other countries, Norway has come a long way when it comes to gender equality in working life. Norway has a high degree of gender equality and ranks second out of 149 countries in the World Economic Forum’s *Global Gender Gap Report*. The employment rate is nearly as high for women as for men. There are good parental benefits, extensive flexible work arrangements, a statutory right to leave to care for sick children and an entitlement to part-time work in connection with care of children under 12. Parents of young children have a statutory right to day care with a price cap, and day care is offered to young school children outside school hours.

However, we still face challenges. For instance, a large percentage of women are part-time workers. The Norwegian labour market is also gender-divided – partly as a result of the different educational choices – with many industries dominated by either a female or male workforce. This also has a major impact on the gender pay gap.

## **2.1 Measures aiming at eliminating the gender division of the labour market**

Gender-traditional education choices is an important reason for the gender-divided labour market. Two-thirds of the occupational segregation in Norway is a direct consequence of women's and men's educational choices. Some examples of initiatives in Norway, aiming at reducing the gender segregated labour market:

### **2.1.1 The "Young Today" committee**

The Government has set up an expert committee whose mandate is to examine gender equality challenges children and youth face in some important arenas of life. Relevant arenas include family, kindergarten, school and educational system, sports, culture and leisure, consumption, media including social media, blogging etc. Some of the main fields of examination will be to examine gender traditional choices of education and work, and propose measures aiming at changing this pattern.

### **2.1.2 Girls and technology**

Girls and technology (Jenter og teknologi ) is a project run by the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises (NHO) and The Norwegian Society of Engineers and Technologists (NITO). The aim is to raise the percentage of girls doing Science subjects at all levels. Annual conferences and experience days are organised for girls in lower and upper secondary school. Role models and businesses work to inspire girls and highlight the possibilities open to them within science subjects. The programme has contributed to more girls choosing technology and engineering subjects at the University of Agder, up from 128 in 2005 to 395 in 2014. In the state budget for 2019, the budget for Girls and Technology was increased from 2.5 to 3.5 million NOK. The Government strengthened the project as a part of its work for a more gender equal working life.

### **2.1.3 Men in healthcare**

“Men in healthcare” recruits men aged 26 to 55 to a 12-week supervised training programme as health recruits in nursing homes, giving them the possibility to try out the health and care service as a potential occupational pathway. Men in healthcare is a joint project involving municipalities, county councils, NAV, county governors, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) and the Directorate of Health. Since the beginning in 2010, 1871 men have registered as health recruits. So far, 212 men have received certification through the project.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://mennihelse.no/resultater/>

## **2.2 Efforts to achieve more female executives in the business sector**

There are still few women in executive positions in Norwegian companies. Among the 200 largest companies in Norway, women hold 22 % of the positions in the executive committees, and 90 percent of all CEOs in the same companies are men.<sup>2</sup> Some examples of relevant initiatives:

### **2.2.1 Monitoring tool – gender balance in executive committees**

CORE – Centre for Research on Gender Equality at the Institute for Social Research – is funded by the Ministry of Culture and develops the CORE Norwegian Gender Balance Scorecard. The scorecard maps the gender balance of the executive committees and boards of the largest companies, measured by total revenue, in Norway. The scorecard also examines the distribution of men and women in staff and line positions, and traces these patterns over time.

### **2.2.2 Best practice**

In collaboration with the business community, the government has created a best practice list [\*How to get gender balance at the top of the business sector\*](#), with advice and guidelines on the most important measures for better gender balance at the top. The list is a result of several roundtable discussion that the former Ministry of Children and Equality and the Minister of Trade and Industry hosted with business leaders and other relevant representatives from the business sector. The list has been distributed to the 500 largest Norwegian companies.

### **2.2.3 New action plan – female entrepreneurs**

Women are underrepresented as business owners and among entrepreneurs. In 2017, only three of ten entrepreneurs were women. Therefore, the Government will submit a new action plan for female entrepreneurship.

## **3. Gender pay gap**

### ***Questions:***

- Promoting active labour market policies on full and productive employment and decent work for women, eliminating gender-based discrimination in labour markets and enacting and enforcing minimum wages (operative paragraphs 23, 25, 28 and 29);

---

<sup>2</sup> CORE Norwegian Gender Balance Scorecard.  
<https://www.samfunnsforskning.no/core/english/publications/core-norwegian-gender-balance-scorecard/>

- Eliminating gender-based occupational segregation and gender wage gaps, and improving recruitment, retention and promotion policies for women (operative paragraphs 25, 29, 31 and 48);

In 2018, women earned 87.1 percent of men's pay when we include full-time and part-time employees. In 2017, the proportion was 86.7 per cent, which means that the gender pay gap has been further reduced in 2018.

### **3.1 Legislation: Equal pay for work of equal value**

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination, among others, on the grounds of gender. Wage discrimination is also prohibited. The Act states that women and men in the same undertaking shall receive equal pay for the same work or work of equal value. Pay shall be set in the same way for women and men without regard to gender.

According to the Act, the right to equal pay for the same work or work of equal value applies, as before, irrespective of whether the work relates to different professions or whether their pay is regulated by different wage agreements. Whether the work is of equal value shall be determined following an overall assessment in which emphasis is put on the expertise required to perform the work and other relevant factors, such as effort, responsibility and working conditions. Further, a worker who suspects pay discrimination can demand that the employer provides written confirmation of the pay level and the criteria for the setting of the pay of the person with whom the person in question is making a comparison. Disclosing wage information promotes transparency in the workplace. Further, the Act has a provision, which clarifies employee's rights in connection with parental leave.

According to the act, employers have a legal duty to make efforts to promote gender equality. All employers shall make active, targeted and systematic efforts to promote equality and prevent discrimination on the basis of (among others) gender, pregnancy, leave in connection with childbirth or adoption, care responsibilities, gender identity and gender expression. These duties include gender-perspective in combination with other grounds of discrimination, and the duties encompass a wide range of various matters such as recruitment, pay and working conditions, promotion, development opportunities, accommodation, the opportunity

to combine work with family life and preventing harassment. The obligation to make active efforts does not outline specific measures to be taken, but calls upon the employer to design measures that address the discrimination challenges faced by the enterprise.

Further, all public undertakings, regardless of size, and private undertakings that ordinarily employ more than 50 persons shall apply a specified work method in their gender equality work. These undertakings shall a) investigate whether there is a risk of discrimination or other barriers to gender equality, b) analyze the causes of identified risks, c) implement measures suited to counteract discrimination and promote greater equality and diversity in the undertaking, and d) evaluate the results of efforts made pursuant to a) to c). This legal duty encompasses pay and working conditions. These efforts shall be made on an ongoing basis and in cooperation with representatives of the employees. Employers who have a duty to prepare an annual report shall include a statement on the current state of affairs with regard to gender equality, in the annual report. In addition, public authorities and public undertakings shall issue such statements.

In addition, employer and employee organisations are obliged to promote equality and prevent discrimination based on gender.

Further, public authorities have a special responsibility to promote gender equality and prevent discrimination. Public authorities shall consider gender impact and apply a gender lens in public policy and all other activities (mainstreaming).

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman Act entered into force on January 1st 2018, repealing the previous Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman Act. This act includes provisions of the organization of the Ombudsman and the Tribunal, their tasks, and processing of cases by the tribunal.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman works, as before, to promote equality and to prohibit discrimination, by raising awareness about (among other) equal pay and wage discrimination. The Ombudsman gives guidance to employers on equal pay provisions. The guidance given by the Ombudsman is an important tool to promote the right to equal pay. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination tribunal handles (among other) claims concerning wage discrimination and equal pay for men and women for equal work and for work of equal value.

### **3.2 Other measures – closing the gender pay gap**

The social partners are responsible for conducting wage negotiations in Norway. The authorities act as legislator and facilitator. Agreements on wage increases are established through negotiations between the employee and employer organisations as well as through local and individual negotiations.

The authorities and the social partner organisations cooperate in the Norwegian Technical Calculation Committee for Wage Settlements. This arrangement helps the authorities and the social partners reach a common understanding of the current situation and trends in the Norwegian economy. The Technical Calculation Committee for Wage Settlements prepares documentation on trends in prices and wages, including wage trends for women and men. A report is published annually.

Wage issues are also discussed in the Council for Working Life and Pensions Policy, where the social partners and the Government meet regularly. Furthermore, a working group on equality in working life has been established, in which relevant ministries and social partner umbrella organisations/social partners' major organisations participate. The challenges concerning equal pay have been discussed in the framework of tripartite cooperation (both in Council for Working Life and Pensions Policy and in the working group on equality in working life).

### **3.3 Strengthening the legislation: Activity and reporting duty**

In May 2019, the Norwegian Government submitted a bill to the Norwegian Parliament (the Storting) on new legislation on active equality efforts. The bill aims to strengthen public authorities' and employers' duties to make efforts against discrimination based on gender and other personal characteristics (grounds of discrimination). In addition, the bill aims to strengthen the duty to document and/or to report on active equality efforts made by employers and public authorities.

According to the bill, employers in all public undertakings and in private undertakings that employ more than 50 persons shall investigate whether there are gender pay disparities in the enterprise. The duty to investigate gender salary disparities covers equal work and work of equal value. Employers shall, in cooperation with employees' representatives, evaluate and find out what kind of work is to be regarded as equal work and work of equal value.

Employers shall document the investigation of wage disparities. On this basis, employers shall analyze causes of risks of wage discrimination and implement measures to tackle them. They shall also evaluate the results of this work.

According to the bill, employers in private enterprises between 20 and 50 employees have the same duty to investigate gender pay disparities, provided labor unions or employers' association requests it. Furthermore, employers shall provide a report on their equality work. The report should be published. The data on salaries should be anonymized so that any individual subjects cannot be identified in the report. Enterprises in the private sector with less than 20 employees shall have a duty to document their work.

## **4. Work-family balance**

### *Questions:*

- Promoting the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities by recognizing, valuing, reducing and redistributing women's disproportionate share of unpaid and domestic work, increasing flexibility in working arrangements, such as part-time work, and making sustained investments in the care economy to expand access to quality childcare and care facilities for children and other dependents (operative paragraphs 10, 26, 30, 40 and 44);
- Accelerating the transition of women from informal to formal employment through access to decent work, social protection, quality childcare, and education and training, including for migrant women workers and domestic workers (operative paragraphs 10, 22 and 40);

### **4.1 Part-time work**

The proportion of part-time employed women has declined from 40 per cent in 2013 to 37 per cent in 2018. However, there are big differences by industries. For example, only 13 percent of women work part-time in the state (2017) and only 11 per cent of women work part-time in the finance industry (2018). In the municipal sector, however, every second woman works part-time. In the municipal health and care services, two out of three employees are part-time employees (65 per cent). (Figures as of December 1, 2018).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/likestillingspolitisk-redegjorelse-2019/id2643307/>

A number of concrete measures have been implemented to reduce the use of involuntary part-time, for example in the health care sector.

#### **4.1.1 Amendments in the Working Environment Act**

Some examples of relevant amendments in the Working Environment Act:

Part-time employees have preferential right to vacant positions. From 2014, part-time employees who have regularly worked beyond their agreed-upon job percentage have the right to a position corresponding to their actual working hours. From 1 January 2014, employers have an obligation to discuss the use of part-time with elected representatives once a year.<sup>4</sup> From 1 January 2019, part-time employees may also have preferential rights to only part of a position when this is not a significant disadvantage for the employer.

#### **4.1.2 A culture of full-time employment in working life**

As the owner of health enterprises since 2011, the Norwegian minister of Health gave order to the Health enterprises to reduce their use of part-time positions. This has shown visible results and the share of part-time has decreased.

## **4.2 Childcare services**

### **4.2.1 Kindergarten**

Children between the ages of one and five may attend kindergarten. In addition to being a family-oriented arrangement and a pedagogical offer for children under school age, day-care facilities for all children are a means to gain equality between the genders. The entitlement to a place in a kindergarten applies to children who turn one year old no later than the end of October in the year that they apply for a place.<sup>5</sup> In 2018, 92% of all children aged one to five years went to kindergarten. In 2013, the share was 90%. The maximum price for 2018 is NOK 2910 per month and NOK 32 010 per year.

The government has made kindergarten more affordable for low-income families and introduced an improved social profile for parents' fees. The application of income-based differentiation in parents' fees enables more families to take advantage of kindergartens. A national minimum requirement for reduced parents' fees for low-income families was introduced on 1 May 2015. The fee for the first child is not to exceed six per cent of the

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2005-06-17-62>

<sup>5</sup>Fakta om barnehage hentet fra regjeringen.no: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/families-and-children/kindergarten/innsikt/opptak-i-barnehagen/id2344761/>

family's total capital and personal income, with a ceiling set at the maximum established parents' fee. There are sibling discounts. Thus, the rates for the second, third, and additional children are 70 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively, of the parents' fee for the first child.

#### *Free core time in kindergarten for three, four and five-year-olds from low-income families*

A scheme providing 20 hours of free kindergarten a week (core time) for four and five-year-olds from low-income families was introduced 1 August 2015. The income ceiling for the 2015–2016 school year is NOK 405 000. From 1 August 2016, the scheme was expanded to include three-year olds as well.

#### **4.2.2 Before and after-school programme (SFO)**

All municipalities must offer a before and after-school programme from the first to the fourth grade, and for children with special needs from the first to the seventh grade.<sup>6</sup> This means that children can stay in school before and after school, while their parents are at work. Expenses may be covered through parental payment.

#### **4.2.3 Leave for absence for nursing mothers**

A nursing mother is entitled to request the amount of time off necessary for this purpose, at least 30 minutes twice daily, or to request that her working hours be reduced by up to 1 hour per day.<sup>7</sup> When the child is under the age of 1, the mother is entitled to payment when breastfeeding up to one hour each day. This makes it easier for the mother to continue breastfeeding when she goes back to work.

#### **4.2.4 Parental leave**

Norway has a generous parental benefit scheme. On 1 July 2018 Norway introduced a three-part parental leave. The maternal and paternal quotas are 15 weeks each at a benefit rate of 100 per cent parental benefit, or 19 weeks each at a benefit rate of 80 per cent. The joint period, which can be divided between parents freely, is 16 weeks at a benefit rate of 100 per cent parental benefit, or 18 weeks at a benefit rate of 80 per cent parental benefit.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/utdanning/grunnopplaring/artikler/skolefritidsordningen-sfo/id434946/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2005-06-17-62>

<sup>8</sup> <https://familie.nav.no/om-foreldrepenger>

## **5. Sexual harassment, violence and discrimination**

### *Question:*

Preventing and eliminating all forms of violence, discrimination, and sexual harassment against women at work, and providing remedies, support and services for victims and survivors of violence and harassment (operative paragraphs 14, 32 and 33);

### **5.1 Sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment is a serious gender equality problem. Surveys show that sexual harassment, especially among young people, is a major problem in Norway today. Sexual harassment is unacceptable and illegal.

All public authorities, school authorities and employers currently have an obligation to work actively against sexual harassment within their own business and, if necessary, take action. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman plays an important role in putting this theme on the agenda and in giving guidance to employers.

Today, the courts are enforcing cases of sexual harassment. Very few cases of sexual harassment are brought to court. Judicial proceedings take a long time and there is an economic risk involved in bringing legal proceedings.

#### **5.1.1 A new low-threshold enforcement system**

In 2019, the Government proposed a bill to the Norwegian Parliament (the Storting) about establishing a low-threshold system for handling cases regarding sexual harassment.

The bill suggests that the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal should be given authority to enforce the prohibition against sexual harassment. Furthermore, the bill suggests that The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman should be given a wider mandate regarding giving guidance and doing prevention work in these cases. The Ombudsman has a consultative and advisory service for individuals as well as private and public employers. This service is free of charge. Disseminating good examples and methods of work, and improving the understanding of the issues in question, are important aspects of the Ombudsman's work.

### **5.1.2 Examples of other measures – sexual harassment:**

On behalf of the Ministry of Children and Equality, The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) has made an updated knowledge status about sexual harassment in schools (March 2016).

- Sexual harassment in working life is a topic the government is discussing with the social partners.
- The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority, the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman and some of the main employer and employee organisations have launched a campaign aiming to prevent sexual harassment. An online guide has been developed and courses have been arranged around the country.