<http://www.diva-portal.org>

Postprint

This is the accepted version of a chapter published in *Advancing Women in Science: an International Perspective*.

Citation for the original published chapter:

Husu, L. (2015)

A Comprehensive National Approach to Promote Gender Equality in Science: The Case of Norway.

In: Willie Pearson, Jr.; Lisa M. Frehill; Connie L. McNeely (ed.), *Advancing Women in Science: an International Perspective* (pp. 327-329). Cham, Heidelberg, New York, Dordrecht, London: Springer

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-08629-3>

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published chapter.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:oru:diva-41568>

Submitted September 2013 to
Advancing Women in Science: An International Perspective, edited by Willie Pearson, Jr.,
Lisa M. Frehill, and Connie L. McNeely. New York: Springer, 2015

A comprehensive national approach to promote gender in science: the case of Norway

Liisa Husu

The Nordic countries: Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden can be characterized as global gender leaders when it comes to overall gender equality of society (World Economic Forum, 2012). In all five Nordic countries gender equality promotion in the field of academia and science has been actively on the national policy agenda since the 1980s, especially so in Finland, Norway and Sweden (Bergman, 2013). However, if the proportion of women among full professors is used as an indicator of gender equality in academia and science, Norway and Sweden do not excel in a European comparison, having reached the same level as the European (EU-27) countries on average. In the EU-27 and Sweden, 20 % and in Norway 21 % of professors were women in 2010. Finland and Iceland do slightly better with 24 %, Denmark having clearly lower figures with 15 % in 2010 (EC, 2013).

The scientific arena where Nordic countries do excel in a European and international perspective is gender balance in scientific and academic leadership and decision-making. When nine out of ten European universities are still led by men, the Nordic universities, nearly all of them public institutions, show a clearly more gender balanced pattern. 43 % of Swedish, 31 % of Finnish, and 25 % of Norwegian universities had female Rectors (highest leadership position) in 2010 (EU 2013). When it comes to high level scientific boards and committees, recently monitored by European women and science

statistics, Nordic countries again show nearly gender balanced patterns, with Sweden 49 %, Norway at 46 % and Finland 45 % of women in these boards in contrast to EU-27 country average 36 % in 2010 (EU 2013). Notably this development is not anything new in the Nordic region but the boards have been gender balanced since the early 2000s or even earlier (see EC, 2003 and 2009). Nordic women have thus reached significant representation among gatekeepers who shape the scientific agenda.

In the Nordic region, Norway has shown most comprehensive approach to address gender inequalities in science and academia, effectively involving key stakeholders, adopting innovative measures, and systematically and long-term backed up by political will at the highest level. Norway is not a member of the European Union but an EC-associated country, participating fully in European research activities. The most radical measure allowed by Norwegian legislation was the attempt to earmark academic positions for the underrepresented gender. This measure was disallowed by the EFTA Court on January 24, 2003 as discriminatory against men (see Lismoen, 2013). This EFTA ruling forced Norway to develop other types of measures.

The political will to promote gender equality in universities and research is notably evidenced by the high-level Committee set up by The Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry appointed in 2004 a *Committee for Mainstreaming – Women in Science*, later to be changed to be called *Committee for Gender Balance in Research*. The Committee has completed three terms. It is a national level Committee with solid gender expertise, supporting gender equality developments and providing recommendations on measures at the institutions in universities, university colleges and research institutes, engaging in awareness-raising activities and providing advice to stakeholders in the sector. (Gender balance in Research, 2013).

The committee is funded from the state budget, and members and the Chair are appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research. The funds cover a secretariat and funding for activities. The committee cooperates closely with the Research Council of Norway and KILDEN, the Norwegian state funded information centre on gender. It reports regularly for the Ministry of Education and Research and other relevant actors.

The members represent key stakeholders: universities, research institutes, students and funding bodies, should be anchored high enough in their institutions and have shown personal engagement in their institution's work for gender equality. The appointment principles of members thus take into account not only formal representativeness but also commitment and potential for high institutional impact.

The Committee can be characterized as an active national level think tank and information hub for gender actions in academia and scientific research in Norway. It has high visibility and impact also regionally, in the Nordic countries and broader Europe, as well as internationally. Its information portal *Gender Balance in Research - Norway* (both in Norwegian and English, is primarily a collection of Norwegian resources. The portal has been developed by KILDEN Information Centre for Gender Research in Norway, another important national information hub, on the assignment of the Committee.

Inspiration and encouragement of universities by information and advice is complemented by a substantial monetary incentive. The Ministry of Education and Research in Norway has established a Gender Equality Award of two million Norwegian kroner, awarded annually to reward the research communities' gender equality efforts. The award was established in 2007 and has been given out six times. In practice, the Committee is commissioned by the Ministry to announce the award and assess the nominees.

The establishment of this Gender Equality Award is a concrete and visible ministerial measure to encourage and mobilize institutions within higher education and research to

actively engage in gender equality planning, and to give an extra boost to their activities. The award aims to increase the proportion of women in academic positions and thereby promote a better gender balance in academia, and is an addition to resources institutions themselves have reserved for gender equality actions. Universities, university colleges and research institutes are invited to submit their existing action plans and gender equality measures to the Committee. They also have to document financial resources set aside for implementation. The Committee assesses the submitted action plans and measures and gives its recommendation to the Ministry. The award can go to one or more institutions.

The Gender Equality awardee institutions include University of Life Sciences (2012), Norwegian School of Sport Sciences (2009), the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration (2008), the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (2007) in addition to traditional multi-faculty universities. The awards increase the visibility and accountability of gender equality promotion in the universities competing for the award, since detailed evaluations of all candidates applying for the Award are published at the Committee website. Discussions whether a similar award should be established have been going on in at least in Sweden and Iceland.

References

European Commission (EC): *The Gender Challenge in Research Funding. Mapping the European national scenes*. Official Publications of the European Communities Luxembourg: 2009.

European Commission (EC) *She Figures 2012. Statistics and Indicators on Gender Equality in Science*. Luxembourg: Official Publications of the European Communities 2013.

European Commission (EC) *She Figures 2003. Statistics and Indicators on Gender Equality in Science*. Luxembourg: Official Publications of the European Communities 2003.

Gender Balance in Research – Norway, <http://eng.kifinfo.no/>, accessed September 1, 2013.

Lismoen, Harald (2003) “EFTA Court prohibits affirmative action practices”. *EIRO European Industrial Relations Observatory Online*. Accessible at <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2003/02/inbrief/no0302102n.htm>

Solveig Bergman with assistance from Linda M. Rustad and a Nordic reference group (2013): “The Nordic region – a step closer to gender balance in research? Joint Nordic strategies and measures to promote gender balance among researchers in academia”. *Nordic Council of Ministers, TemaNord* 2013:544.

World Economic Forum (2012): *Global Gender Gap Report 2012*.
http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2012.pdf accessed August 19, 2013.