

Policy for gender balance and gender perspectives in research and innovation



About the Research Council of Norway

The Research Council of Norway is a national strategic planning and funding agency for research. The council distributes roughly NOK eight billion for research and innovation activities each year. The Research Council is the chief source of advice and input on research policy for the Norwegian Government, the government ministries and other key institutions and circles affiliated with research and innovation. The council is also responsible for following up the government's long-term plan for research. The Research Council implements national research-policy decisions by means of a wide array of funding schemes. The council works together with the research community, trade and industry and the public administration to increase funding for Norwegian research activities, enhance quality in research, and to promote innovation and knowledge-building. The Research Council seeks to increase international cooperation and expand participation in the EU framework programme on research and innovation. The council also creates meeting places and provides a platform for dialogue between researchers, users of research and research funders.



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Increased momentum towards gender balance

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Gender equality, equal status and equal rights are core values in Norwegian society. This is one of Norway's greatest advantages in the international arena, economically, culturally and politically. It is therefore paradoxical that we have not yet achieved gender equality and gender balance in research and innovation, which are among society's most powerful driving forces.

In both research and innovation, men hold a clear majority of management and other key positions. This imbalance causes bias in research. Many subject fields are also strongly gender-segregated.

There is a clear need to pick up the pace in efforts to improve gender balance. To ensure success, we are seeking close cooperation with the research institutions. We have clarified our goals, and in some areas we will be stipulating more explicit requirements than we have before.

In recent years concerns have emerged over the adverse effects of the rigorous demands placed on young people seeking to pursue a career in research during the short, critical phase of life when many of them are having children and establishing families. A large proportion of researchers also lack permanent employment during this phase. We are committed to addressing this challenge in concert with others.

The world is changing and becoming more diverse. As migration increases and society in general grows more heterogeneous, gender and diversity issues are more often treated as two sides of the same coin. Although this policy specifically applies to gender balance and gender perspectives, several of the measures here will have the important effect of promoting diversity in a broader sense as well. We will also be working to expand knowledge about diversity.

When it comes to promoting gender balance and gender equality in research and innovation, the Research Council of Norway aims to be a leader nationally and internationally – as exemplified by our efforts to ensure continued momentum in this area in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

A challenge for the EU and Norway both in this regard will be to safeguard the quality and relevance of Horizon Europe in the face of backlashes in a number of countries where academic freedom, women's rights and basic human rights have come under threat. But the challenge is not limited to Europe. The Research Council will also continue to press for progress in this area among its research and innovation partners farther afield.


John-Arne Røttingen
Chief Executive



Photo: Jonas Bendixsen

1. Overall objective

The Research Council of Norway is to be at the forefront in promoting gender balance and gender perspectives in research and innovation, both nationally and internationally.

The intention is to work towards gender equality in society, to promote research of the highest quality by fostering the most talented researchers, to create a framework that supports well-functioning research groups and to ensure a breadth of perspectives that enhance explanatory power and innovation.

A successful, democratic society

Equal rights and equal opportunities are fundamentals of a democratic society. A key to the economic and social development of Nordic welfare societies has been the high degree of participation by women and men in working life and society as a whole. Commitment to gender equality is one of Norway's core values; it is a defining element in how Norwegians understand themselves and present their society to the world. The question of who will be setting the agenda for research and social development in the years to come is a crucial component of gender balance and gender perspectives.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

In the autumn of 2015, UN member states adopted 17 goals for sustainable development through 2030. These goals apply to all countries and constitute a roadmap for

global sustainable development efforts. Goal 5 centres on gender equality.

Activities to promote gender balance and gender perspectives will aid directly in the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal 5 and will make research more effective in addressing a number of other sustainability goals in which gender and gender perspectives play a part.

European research and innovation policy

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming are high on the European research policy agenda. Gender equality is one of six European Research Area (ERA) priorities that Norway has committed itself to implementing through the European and national roadmaps. The objectives are to increase the number of women in academic top positions, to improve gender balance in disciplines where either men or women are under-represented, and to strengthen gender integration as a dimension in research and innovation. In the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, gender is a cross-cutting concern with the same objectives to create gender balance in research teams and among decision-makers, and to strengthen the gender dimension in research and innovation.

Need for ambitious, targeted measures

While there has been a longstanding, broad consensus in Norway to pursue gender equality as a common objective, it is still crucial to have high ambitions

and targeted measures. A perception that equality objectives are uncontroversial and beyond question, as if no special attention or effort were required, can lead to apathy and a belief that problems will fix themselves. Experience shows that this is not the case, however. In practice other priorities are often granted precedence over gender equality and gender balance. The #MeToo movement showed that the problems run deeper than many people had imagined.

We are now seeing the contours of active opposition to women's rights and gender equality efforts – though, in Norway's case, in politically extreme movements. In Europe such backlashes have reached official policy level in a number of countries where women's rights and the term gender are perceived as a societal threat. It is evident that this is part of a broader phenomenon, which includes attitudes towards academic freedom and basic human rights.

A challenge for both the EU and Norway in this regard is to safeguard the quality and relevance of Horizon Europe with regard to gender issues and gender equality. The Research Council has a role to play through channels such as NordForsk and the EEA Grants as well, but this challenge is not limited to Europe. For the Research Council, it is important to prioritise this area on a national basis and in the agencies and instruments that have been designed to strengthen international cooperation in research and innovation.

2. Research Council's social mission



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The Research Council contributes to the development of a research and innovation system that improves the knowledge base and generates new solutions.

Loss of talent and biased recruitment pose both a democratic challenge and an obstacle to achieving the ambitious objectives set for Norwegian research. Incorporating gender as a perspective implies that biological and social gender is reflected in research content, impacts and outcomes. An increasing number of studies show that the integration of diverse perspectives helps to increase creativity, scientific quality and social relevance.

Societal outcomes

A well-functioning, gender-balanced research system helps to create a more democratic and sustainable society.

It also puts Norwegian research on a better footing to meet the future, strengthens its legitimacy within the population, and helps to enhance Norway's international competitiveness.

Such a system will result in greater career-path equality for women and men, more balanced gender distribution within disciplines and professions, a larger proportion of women in top positions, higher quality Norwegian research and greater diversity of research content. It will also help to achieve one of the six defined ERA priorities.

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.

In keeping with its social mission, the Research Council will:

be a national and international driving force to promote gender balance and knowledge about gender perspectives in research and innovation

systematically assess the gender dimension in the Research Council's investments in research and innovation;

strengthen and expand the knowledge base on gender balance and gender perspectives for research and innovation policy

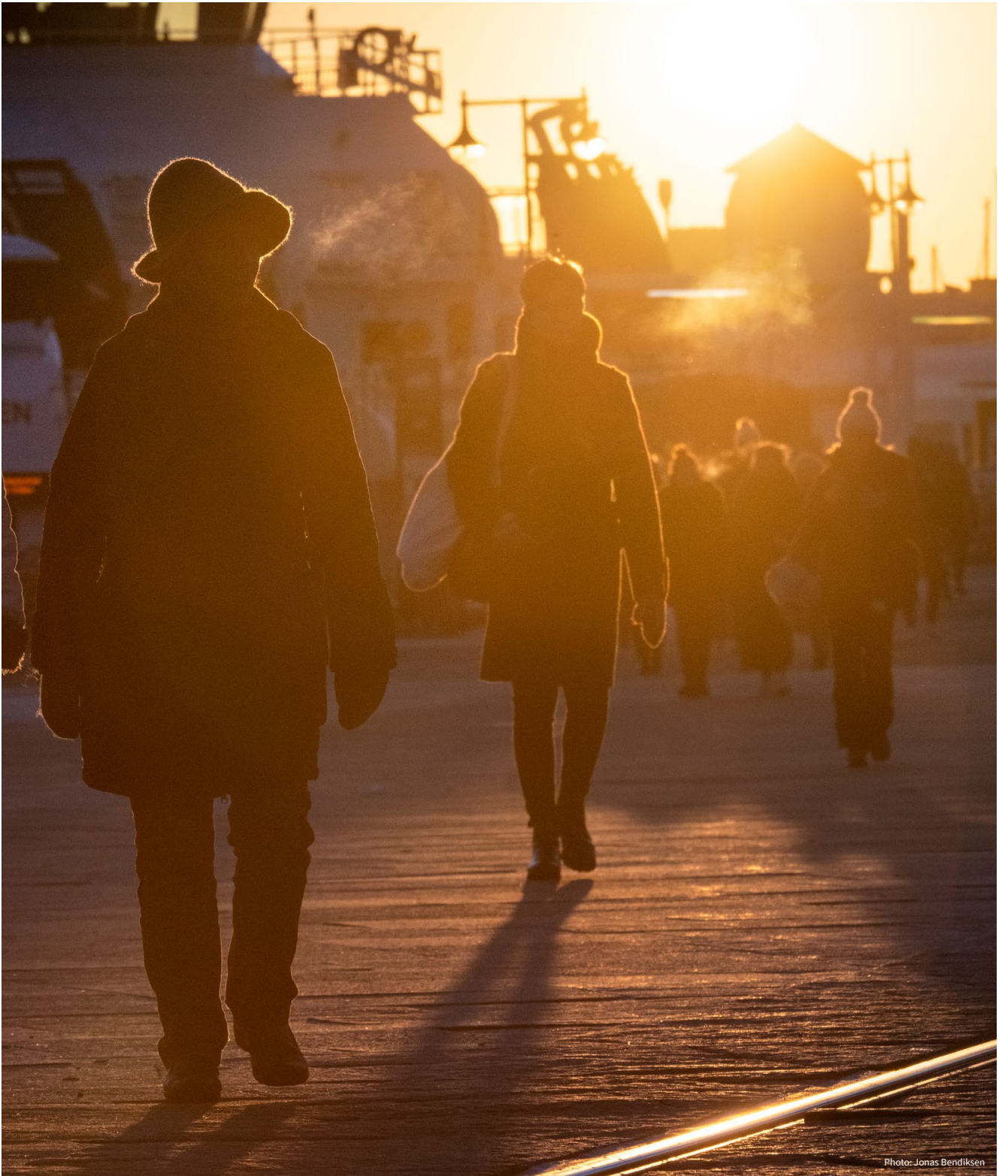


Photo: Jonas Bendiksen

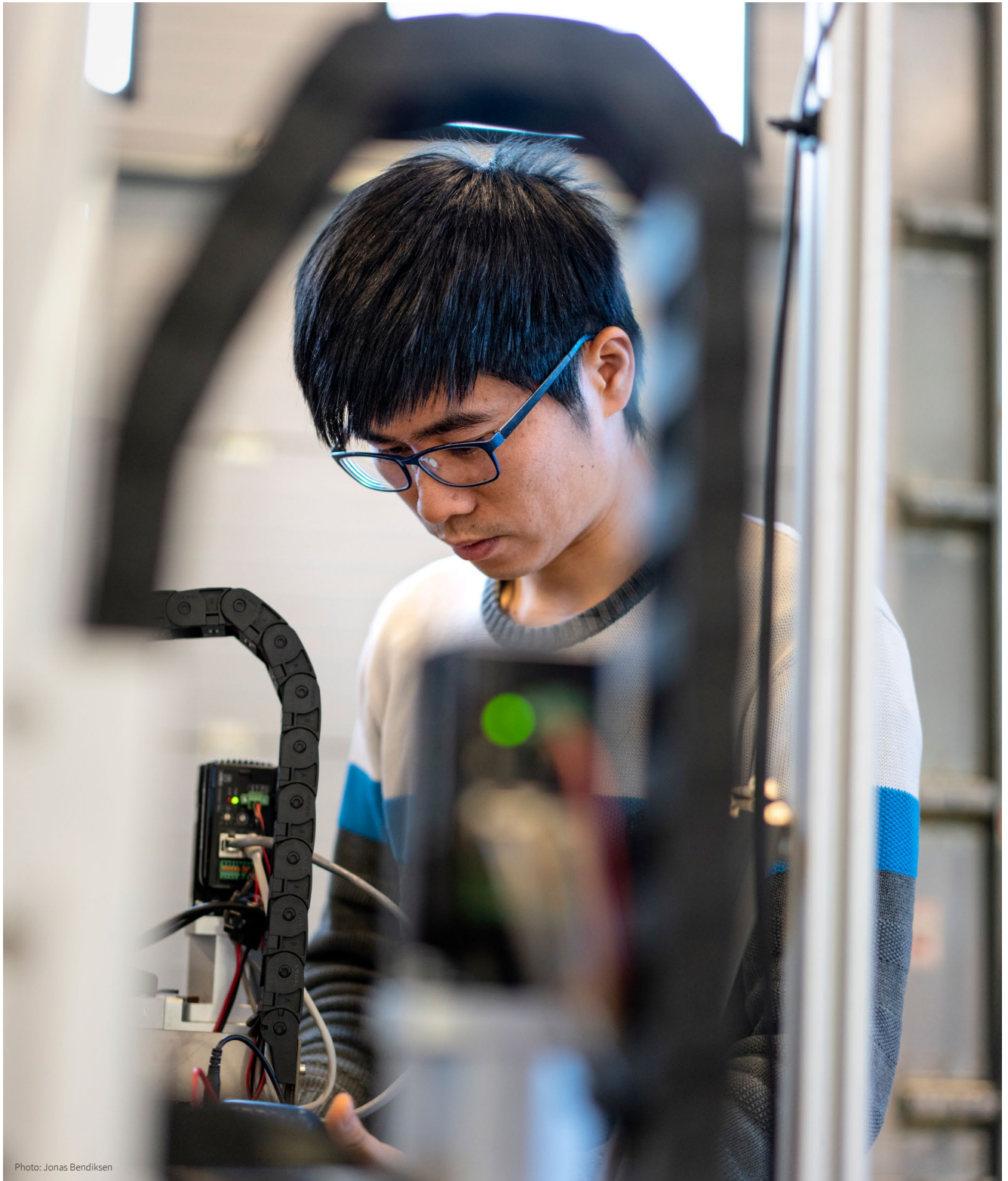


Photo: Jonas Bendiksen

3. Gender balance in research and innovation

In Norwegian research there are two main gender-balance challenges. One is that upper-level recruitment remains significantly male dominated, with progress towards a more equal balance occurring generally at a very slow pace. The other is that disciplines, professions and specialities are to a large degree gender-divided.

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, less than a third of all professors at Norway's universities and university colleges are women. The proportion has been growing slowly, at less than one percentage point per year, and now appears to be declining. Especially in mathematics and natural sciences, the proportion of women in top positions is small compared with the proportion at lower levels. 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. This imbalance exists in many countries and has received significant international attention.

Meanwhile, many disciplines, specialities and professional courses of study in Norway are dominated either by women or by men. The predominance of either



gender in a given field is unfortunate. The prevalence of one gender and associated lack of role models in a discipline can itself undermine progress and impede efforts to broaden recruitment. In recent times, however, the gender split has shifted relatively quickly in some professions and courses of study, including medicine, law and meteorology. It is also the case that gender-skewed professions often regarded as “female” or “male” in Norway may be viewed entirely differently in other countries.

These two challenges – gender disparity between levels and between disciplines – are also reflected in the distribution of women and men between the public and private sectors.

Gender disparity, whether horizontal or vertical, is detrimental to research and to society as a whole.

The Research Council will take steps to ensure that the gender distribution

among project managers and senior researchers in projects is no more imbalanced than in 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, research institutes, health trusts, and trade and industry.

The Research Council's activities extend across a wide spectrum ranging from research and development in the business sector to curiosity-driven and ground-breaking research. A general objective when allocating funding is to ensure that the gender imbalance does not exceed 40/60. There is great variation between disciplines and sectors, however, and the objectives and measures must be adapted to different challenges.

Temporary contracts, keen external competition and limited traditions for institutional leadership can lead to an



Photo: Sverre Chr. Jarild

THE BALANSE PROGRAMME

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 enhance the 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.

FRONT

The project *Female researchers on track* (FRONT) (2015-2019) is targeted towards gender equality among employees and development of a gender balance culture. FRONT is a collaborative project between the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and the Centre for Gender Research at the University of Oslo, and has received funding from the Programme on Gender Balance in Senior Positions and Research Management (BALANSE).

The background for the project was bias in selection for senior academic positions over time. While gender balance has essentially been achieved in Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes at the faculty, only 20 % of all professorships are held by women.

The project has had work packages in three areas: leadership and organisational development, cultural change based on research, and advancement measures to increase the proportion of women in top positions. Activities will be continued under a new FRONT II project that has received funding from 2019.

extremely competitive atmosphere at many research groups, also internally. This inhibits creativity and productivity and causes highly motivated people and talented researchers to abandon research and choose other career paths. Women are not the only ones affected.

Myths that portray research and researcher careers as extremely demand-

ing at a personal level are another hindrance to broad-based recruitment.

The Programme on Gender Balance in Senior Positions and Research Management (BALANSE) is a policy-oriented programme at the Research Council that responds to these challenges. The programme will help to bring about structural and cultural change

in the research system through new knowledge, learning and innovative measures.

The Research Council will further develop these efforts and will stipulate clear expectations for institutions to incorporate gender balance measures in their plans, strategies, prioritisation of grant applications.

This policy encompasses five main focus areas. The Research Council will focus its efforts on gender balancing in three areas in particular: excellence in research initiatives, trade and industry, and career policies tailored to phase of life. In addition, gender perspectives has been defined as a separate focus area, as has gender-related expertise and quality in the Research Council's internal activities.

FOCUS AREA 1: Excellence in research initiatives

Excellence in research initiatives refer to structuring schemes designed to support and develop specialist research groups performing at the highest level of quality.

The Research Council will

- require a plan, which includes reporting, to promote gender balance and career development for project staff in all calls for proposals for the centre schemes and large-scale projects;
- consider setting target figures for the various centre schemes, etc., for gender distribution among project managers and within researcher groups, differentiated by subject field;
- emphasise and clearly communicate gender balance by visiting projects, institutions, and in efforts to increase participation in R&D activities;
- introduce a requirement that universities, research institutes and health trusts submitting five or more applications under new centre scheme-based calls for proposals must list women as the head in at least 40% of the proposed centres;
- work together with the institutions to achieve a higher proportion of women project managers in large international consortia;
- pursue the DORA declaration's objective of improved project evaluation in a way that contributes to gender balancing;

- require that institutions nominate an equal number of women and men for Research Council awards, and that selection methods and award decisions result in a balanced gender division;
- monitor and contribute to the international debate on what defines excellence in research;
- analyse and assess the effects of excellence in research initiatives on gender balance in research and innovation.

FOCUS AREA 2: Trade and industry

The Research Council's investments must help in finding solutions that address challenges in all parts of society, in research, innovation and entrepreneurship. This means supporting innovation that draws on a greater proportion of the talent pool and addresses broad societal challenges.

Technological development is evolving at a rapid pace and sets the framework for society and industry. Artificial intelligence, robotics and the Internet of Things have an increasingly greater impact on how we view, understand and live in the world. New technologies often create new gender divides, and may serve to reinforce both differences and bias. We must be vigilant if we are to succeed in reducing the emergence of gender imbalance.

The Research Council will

- analyse barriers and develop measures to increase the proportion of women in innovation projects in the business sector;
- implement targeted measures through student entrepreneurship, the Programme on Commercialising R&D Results (FORNY2020) and the Centres for Research-based Innovation (SFI);
- increase learning and knowledge transfer between funding instruments;
- promote and use role models actively and purposefully;
- further develop the BALANSE programme in conjunction with business-oriented initiatives to promote cultural and structural change;



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- contribute actively in networks and cooperation with relevant organisations to raise awareness of the role of gender balance in value creation;
- initiate a project to learn more about how to increase the proportion of women in research in the business sector;
- promote responsible research and innovation in the technology areas.

FOCUS AREA 3: Career policies tailored to phase of life

Researchers pursuing an academic career must confront many difficult challenges during a short phase of life when many of them are also having children and establishing families. It is also a phase when a majority of researchers lack permanent employment. Researchers in this phase express a great need for more predictability and less reliance on temporary employment.

The Research Council will

- design funding instruments that better accommodate differentiated career paths and flexible work trajectories in which experience gained in civil society and in the public and private sectors is given positive weight;
- strengthen schemes that encourage early mobility at student level and in graduate-level researcher schools, researcher courses of study and doctoral research fellowships;
- develop and test multiple models for early-phase career development which accommodate the need for mobility between different societal sectors as well as different phases of life;
- facilitate a flexible approach to outgoing mobility;
- introduce extra funding in addition to deferrals for researchers on parental leave during a funding period;
- encourage institutions to facilitate career development and implement concrete measures to enhance work-life balance;
- seek to reduce the prevalence of temporary contracts and learn more about the impacts of Research Council investments on temporary employment;
- initiate discussions about attitude, work culture and management in research.



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4. Gender perspectives in research and innovation

A diversity of entry points and perspectives in research strengthens the quality of knowledge production, the relevance of research and the ability of society to innovate. There are many examples that illustrate how gender as a perspective can provide new insights and pave the way for new opportunities and better results.

Research generates knowledge that serves as the basis for social development, policy formulation and the development of services and products. It is important to expand participation in research of a variety of groups in society, and to ensure that the knowledge generated benefits all inhabitants, regardless of background.

Innovation processes are dependent on a rich assortment of ideas and perspectives to meet various needs. In the European Research Area (ERA) and in the EU Framework Programme it has been pointed out that gender perspectives are not a sufficiently integral part of research and innovation. This is also the case in Norway.

It is the Research Council's ambition to incorporate gender as a perspective into all of 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. It is also essential to identify areas where there is an especially great need for more knowledge about gender perspectives in research.

FOCUS AREA 4: Gender perspectives

The Research Council will

- participate in international and Nordic cooperation to increase knowledge about the role of the gender dimension in different research areas;
- encourage interdisciplinarity in calls for proposals to ensure that gender perspectives are more widely incorporated in projects;
- identify areas (such as technology, health, the environment) where there is an especially great need to strengthen the gender dimension in research and innovation content, and implement targeted measures with dedicated initiatives in the field;
- conduct field evaluations of Norwegian gender research and assess how portfolio management can help to strengthen research that incorporates gender perspectives;
- pave the way for broader involvement of diverse groups in society and user participation in the design of new initiatives.



Photo: Jonas Bendiksen

5. Expertise and quality within the Research Council

FOCUS AREA 5: Collaboration and mutual learning

The Research Council will

- introduce courses for employees and others involved in the Council's application processes to increase knowledge about and better address conscious and unconscious bias relating to gender and other factors;
- test and assess the impacts of lottery selection in top-ranked candidate groups as a pilot project to see whether it could lead to a more equitable distribution and minimise various forms of bias.
- strengthen the Research Council as a learning organisation by increasing collaboration with other research funders, use of pilot projects, and acquisition of expertise; share experience, knowledge and best practices with other stakeholders in the Nordic region and Europe;
- ensure greater consistency with regard to moderate gender quota practices;
- step up ministry advisory services and sector dialogue to encourage a change in focus;
- implement clearer and more assertive promotion and external communication in relevant areas by expanding the gender balance barometer's scope to include more dimensions;
- ensure satisfactory gender balance in online publishing and meeting places; be aware of the importance of role models, find new ones and make room for them;
- participate actively in public debate on these issues in co-operation with external stakeholders such as the Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research (KIF), the Young Academy of Norway (AYF) and others;



THE KIF COMMITTEE

The Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research (KIF) provides support and recommendations on measures contributing to gender balance and diversity in the Norwegian research sector. The committee receives its mandate from the Ministry of Education and Research and is appointed for a four-year period. The first committee was established in 2004. The purpose of the committee's work is two-fold: To contribute to gender balance and diversity among employees in the Norwegian research sector, and to work with diversity and gender perspectives in research. The KIF Committee meets with institutions, provides advisory services, promotes awareness in political circles, develops tools and organises seminars. Read more about the committee at www.kifinfo.no.



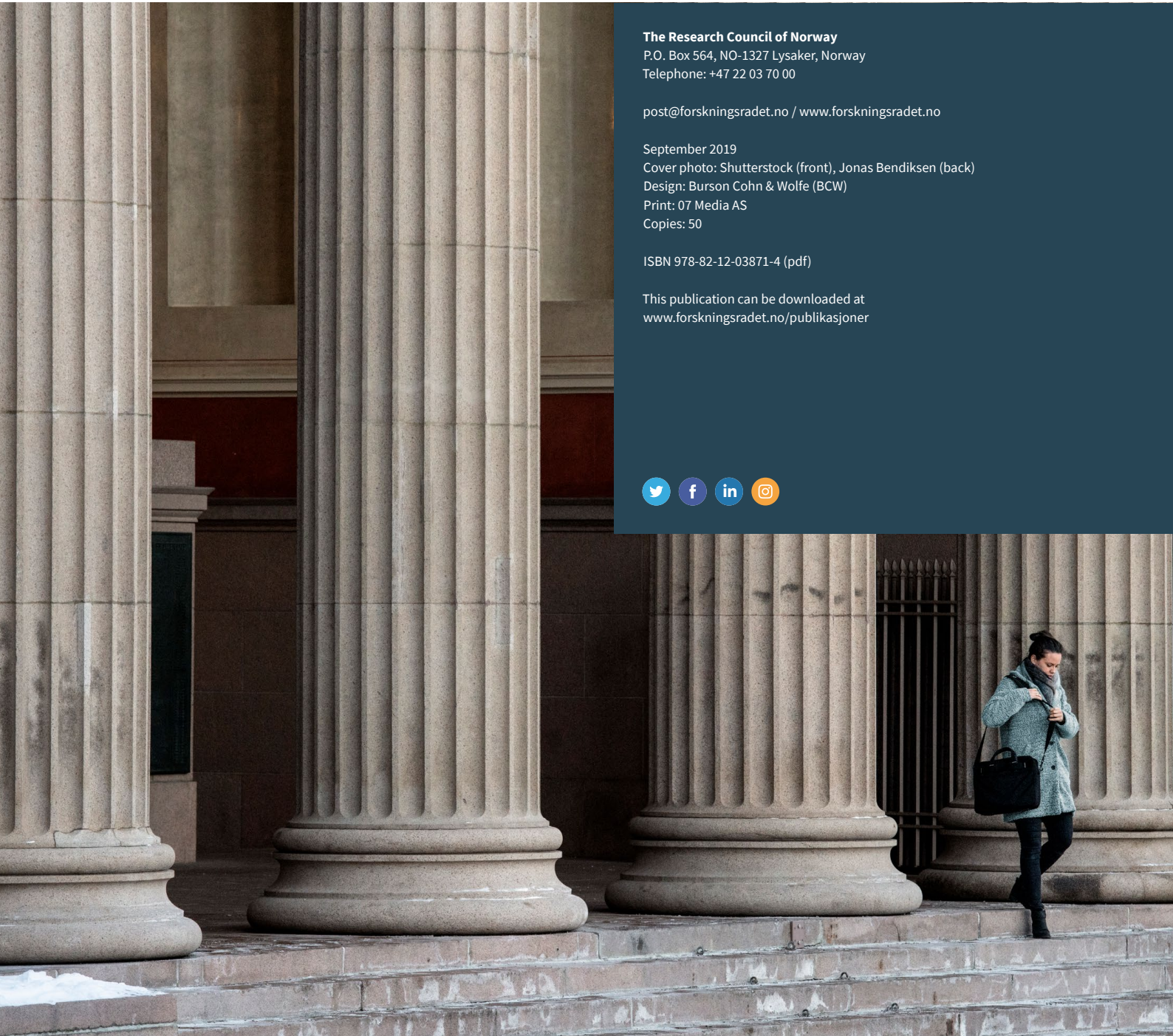
- develop Kilden into an independent national knowledge centre for gender balance and gender perspectives in research;
- strengthen gender equality efforts within the Research Council's own organisation;
- submit annual reports to relevant boards in the Research Council and the ministries.

KILDEN

Kilden genderresearch.no is a national knowledge centre for gender perspectives and gender balance in research and is organised as an independent department within the Research Council. As a knowledge centre, *Kilden* has a national responsibility to promote gender research, gender perspectives and gender balance in research and innovation through activities to disseminate and distil research and to encourage public debate.

Kilden publishes an independent online news magazine on gender issues in a wide array of academic disciplines and topics. The centre also compiles state-of-the-art reviews relating to gender and equality and organises seminars and debates. *Kilden* collaborates with a wide array of actors from the research community, special interest organisations and the public administration. Read more at kjønnsforskning.no





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