

Gender equality and quality of life - how gender equality can contribute to development in Europe. A study of Poland and Norway

Main goal of the project 'Gender Equality and Quality of Life' (GEQ) is to investigate gender equality (GE) and the benefits it has for quality of life and social development. The lack of progress in fostering GE in Europe and particularly in Poland calls for new framing of gender equality in order to construct effective policies to overcome this impasse. Our bottom-up approach to GE focuses on the cultural and institutional contexts of individual lives and struggles for a satisfactory and healthy life in relation to gender equality. Project methods involve survey research in Poland, backed up by secondary data analysis, policy analysis and qualitative research in both countries. Expanding on a Norwegian method of measuring GE we will conduct the first comprehensive study in Poland that is centrally focused on GE. The survey research will include seven dimensions related to gender equality: attitudes and norms, practices, resource distribution, identity, life course experiences, quality of life and social development. All these dimensions will be studied over the life course in different areas, including work, family, political participation, decision-making and violence. The findings will map existing inequalities, highlight the structural, cultural and institutional determinants of GE and identify the conditions that foster positive impact of GE on the quality of life and social development. The project represents a major step towards methodological progress concerning measurement of GE, making the project unique on the European scale. The outcomes will include frontline expert research-capacity building in Poland and Norway, inputs and guidelines for further research and development, and new research evidence. The new GE framework will be a stimulus for a new, more comprehensive and effective gender mainstreaming strategy in Poland and in Norway.

Gender equality (GE) is one of the most complex and contested concepts in recent decades in Europe and worldwide (Verloo 2007; Walby 2009). It has been embraced by



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development practitioners from the World Bank to the smallest NGO's and its importance for the social and human development and quality of life is recognized by most international organisations. For example, the World Bank's (2012) development report found that closing persistent gender gaps is the only way for countries to increase their productivity and improve development outcomes for the coming generations. GE continues to be investigated as a tool for development in the developing countries (e.g. World Survey on the Role of Women in Development by UNDP since 1984), but it is only recently that GE has been seen as a tool for European development (EU 2020 Development Strategy). While some European countries have received relatively high scores on GE indexes, there is an evident divide between European countries as far as GE is concerned, and moreover, a noticeable lack of progress in some regions. A deepening social divide in family responsibilities is noticeable in analyses of men's share in weekly unpaid working time. So the countries with low male participation in family responsibilities (inc. Poland) are becoming less gender equal in this respect, and countries with higher male participation (inc. Norway) are continuing to involve men more (Scambor al 2012). The 2012 Global Gender Gap Report shows that in some European countries the gap is widening (e.g. Spain, Hungary), with many countries making little progress. While Norway is ranked 3 (along with other Nordic countries), Poland is ranked 54 (down from 42 in 2011), with a particularly low score in the economic participation category. Implementing gender equality policies in Europe, including Norway (NOU 2011:18, NOU 2012:15) and Poland (UNDP 2007, Słany, Krzaklewska, Ratecka 2012), has proven to be difficult, and the new social and economic crisis in Europe threatens to exacerbate this situation (e.g. through austerity measures). It is clear that there is a need for more research on GE in order to be able to design the policy measures needed to face these challenges.

Recently, the EU Gender Commission noted the severe lack of progress in honouring the commitments made as part of the Beijing Platform for Action, and stressed the need for



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new indicators in the area of gender stereotypes, more analytical reports at EU level and new GE legislation.

The project builds on earlier European projects on gender equality, in which the project team members participated, such as: Men and work-life balance (CROME: Hearn et al 2002, Holter as partner), Work changes gender (Puchert et al 2005, Holter as partner and WP2 leader), FOCUS Fostering Caring Masculinities (Holter as advisor), Role of men in gender equality (Scambor et al 2012, Holter as expert team member), Reducing gender-related violence (CAHRV), Women in migrations (FEMIPOL, EU FF7, 2011 Slany as national coordinator, Kowalska as researcher), Gendered Citizenship in Multicultural Europe (FEMCIT, EU FF6 2011, Halsaa as research director), DAPHNE II UE on Violence against Older Women within Families (2009 with Tobiasz-Adamczyk, Woźniak). It builds on the national projects: Nordic projects on gender equality and power (Køn och makt i Norden 2010, Holter as project member) and social innovation in family reconciliation (Holter 2007), as well as Polish projects such as Gender and Economic Choice (carried out for the World Bank in 2010, Krzaklewska as researcher), Diversia – family reconciliation and life satisfaction (Krzaklewska 2011 as researcher) and Gender based discrimination realized for the Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment concerning gender discrimination in Poland (Slany, Krzaklewska, Ratecka 2012). While these reports extensively contributed to the research on gender equality, there have been limitations to GE framework, including how GE was theorised, measured and applied. First, none of these studies built on the extended survey method of the Norwegian model used in our project, thereby lacking a central comprehensive data set focused on GE. Second, since gender inequality most visibly affects women, the attention to men was limited in most of these studies. A dual-gender perspective, and a focus on interaction between the genders, is central for advancing research as well as policy applications. As long as gender means women, gender equality will be halted. Instead, in our project, we will address men as well as women as active makers of their own “gender



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future”, redoing gender yet acting under constraints (Kimmel 2000; Puchert et al 2005). GE policies have also focused on including more women in the existing structures, instead of trying to redefine the structures that hinder gender equality. This tendency can be seen globally: the UN Millenium Goal to “promote gender equality and empower women” aims solely to include more women in education, and does not challenge the power relations between genders, stereotypes, cultural norms and related structures. While institutional support is crucial for pushing the gender equality agenda forward, critical analyses of the existent gender equality policies is also important (Verloo 2006).

In Poland, gender inequality is present in different spheres: on the labour market (vertical and horizontal segregation, glass ceiling, wage discrimination, sexual molestation), in the public sphere (underrepresentation in political and economic power) and in families (unequal division of unpaid work and care, violence) (UNDP 2007, Slany, Krzaklewska, Ratecka 2012, and many others). The lack of a national strategy and effective political machinery that aims to eliminate gender discrimination, has resulted in the marginalization of women’s rights and progress in terms of gender equality. The absence of the tools necessary for monitoring and evaluating expected changes, as well as the lack of political will, show that GE issues are not prioritized by politicians and state officials. The reduction of public expenditures especially in regards to health, work-life balance and education disproportionately affect women (Czerwińska et al 2010, Kowalska 2013). Women not only lose jobs in the most feminized sectors of labour market, but the majority of state obligations for heath, care and education are also being transferred to family (and come to rest on women’s shoulders). Those processes have affected many Polish families, the quality and length of their lives, their health, and their general well-being. The state created new opportunities for mostly wealthy and educated women. This has resulted in huge social inequalities between women from different classes and social groups on unprecedented scale.



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In Norway, advances have been made in GE through the combination of a strengthening of gender equal rights, including children's rights, and alliance policies. The 'daddy quota' (paternity leave, now 12 weeks) and the board room quota (at least 40% women in public company boards) were both implemented on the basis of alliances between care-oriented interests, and competitive and talent-oriented interests in the business sector, becoming (more or less willing) partners in GE development. Although GE approaches in Norway are strongly linked to the welfare state, GE is in fact developing in very uneven and varied ways throughout society, for example, development of GE reforms may depend on who wins the next election. Policies have been partly contradictory (father quota and cash support for mothers), are often controversial (quotas), and Norway's achievements are fragile, unless developed further. The situation shows the need for a broader and more comprehensive research base in Norway including basic research. Among the many important research issues that the project will advance, is the question of "gender equalities" and different development paths, as opposed to a linear progress model of GE, which tends to translate to little research (GE is going well, no pressing need) and political passivity (NOU 2011).

In sum, our project will put gender equality in the center, in a broader and more precise way than has been done before, and take cultural and institutional contexts into account. Creating sustainable gender equality development based on national circumstances and internal potentials differs from a superficial and ineffective "export" model. Identifying potential resources among men as well as women, and a cultural assessment and translation of main GE issues, will be a major part of the project. Research in Poland as well as Norway has confirmed the impact cultural norms have on the development of gender equality, religious beliefs, family roles, masculinity and femininity norms and gender stereotypes. These in turn play a role in the discrimination of women in the public sphere and gender inequality in families. Although both countries differ in many respects, similar ambivalence or resistance to gender equality, especially in social



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class and cultural contexts where options are limited exists in Norway (NOU 2012:15; Holter, Svare, Egeland 2009). By investigating the specific case of Poland, being a new European country and a 'laboratory' of social change, and contrasting it with the Norwegian case, areas for advancement can also be identified for Norwegian GE policies. The project will help develop GE research into a larger academic field in Norway, beyond the small and mainly applied research field situation of today. In the future, this field will have potential for being in the forefront of international research.

GE is associated with positive macro trends that include better welfare systems, lower unemployment, lower income disparity, lower violence against women, higher quality of life, better health, longer life expectancy, and higher fertility, but the interrelations are complex. As shown in the World Bank study, income growth by itself does not deliver greater gender equality on all fronts (2012). Different factors, such as economic situations, policy solutions, cultural norms, values, and the structure of power relations affect the closing of the gender gap. The difficulty in assessing the correlations also comes from a lack of comprehensive research, especially on the individual level, which measures men's and women's experiences of equality in their daily lives.

WHO defines Quality of Life (QOL) as "individuals perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns." This broad concept includes six dimensions: the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and his/her relationship to salient features of his/her environment" (WHOQOL Group 1995) and is linked to the concept of positive health (Bowling 2005). NIKK research confirms earlier studies and shows that GE has a positive effect on quality of life and health, especially for women (Holter et al. 2009; Kitterød 2000). Backhans et al.'s findings (2007) indicate though that gender inequality is generally correlated with poorer health for both men and women. The authors underline the importance of men's engagement: "one-sided expansion by women into



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traditionally male roles, spheres and activities will not lead to positive health effects unless men also significantly alter their behaviour.” Their results indicate the importance the context has for enjoying GE benefits, the pioneers of GE (those whose GE attitudes and practices are more equal than in their surroundings) might enjoy less health benefits than those whose GE perceptions and practices are backed up by the GE environment.

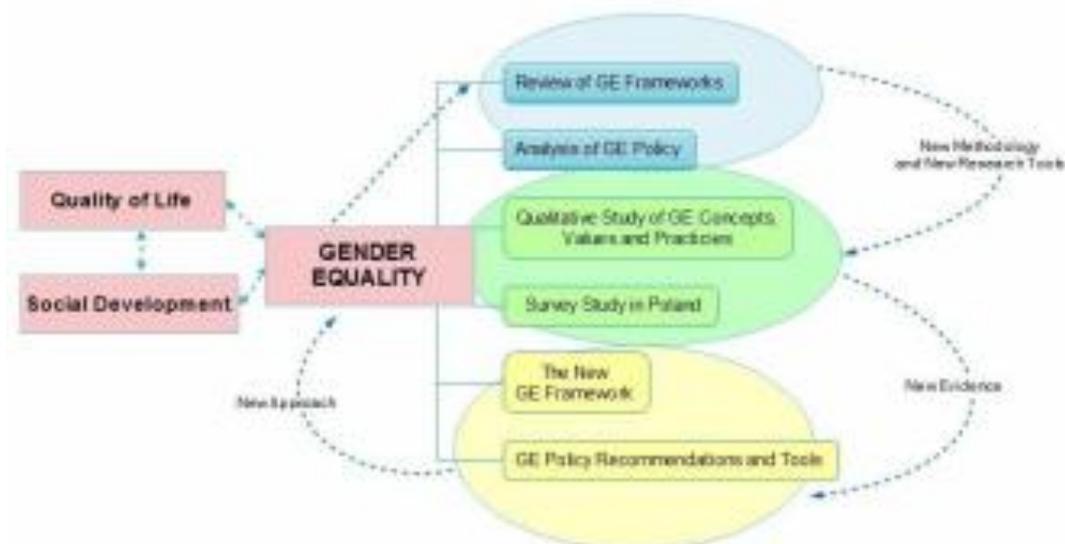
Project objectives

1. Create new framework for studying GE: This project will take into account the lack of

progress in fostering GE in Europe and in Poland, and respond to the EU call for developing new indicators of gender equality and innovative legislation. A new gender equality framework, where gender equality is connected to quality of life measures, including health, economic participation, work-life balance, violence, will be developed. The framework consists of a theory part (analysing gender equality as multidimensional) and a method part (survey research methodology with corresponding qualitative studies). The aim of the project will be to create a research tool (survey questionnaire) to be used in Poland (within this project) and Norway (on external funding), with the potential for broader application in Europe and beyond. The new GE indicators will be based on the survey results, including the measures on the individual level, of both men and women, connected to the quality of life dimension and social development.



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2. Determine the impact gender equality has on quality of life within the new framework: The project will study GE and the benefits it has for quality of life by using the newly developed framework. The study will be the first comprehensive study of GE in Poland that is centrally focused on GE, and that also researches the possible QOL benefits of GE and the potential support measures that could increase GE. The empirical study will concentrate on 7 dimensions related to gender equality: gendered attitudes and norms, practices, resource distribution, identity, life course experiences, quality of life and social development and innovation. All dimensions will be mapped over the life course in different areas, incl. work, family, political participation, decision-making, and violence. Validated indicators for quality of life and social development will be used, in combination with new variables for analysing the interrelations between the GE dimensions and the two other dimensions (QOL, SD). These dimensions have been explored to some extent within social research, but no single research project has examined all of these dimensions. By looking at all the dimensions this project can explore the interrelations and impacts between the GE dimensions, and the two associated dimensions of quality of life and social development. Based on previous research findings we hypothesise: 1. Gender equality is a major factor for improving both men and



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women's quality of life 2. In Poland, structural, cultural and institutional constraints may hinder the positive effect of gender equality on quality of life. In order to avoid universalistic and simplistic models on GE impact on quality of life, we instead analyse the conditions for GE. What cultural or local conditions have to be fulfilled for GE to have positive outcomes? What are the contexts that would hinder positive effects of GE? Can we identify the spheres, groups, contexts where GE can be realised and have positive outcomes? What are the potentials for GE in Poland and Norway?

3. Policy application of the new GE framework: Besides being a basic academic research, the project aims to use the results of the survey in policy recommendations and tools development for both Poland and Norway. The results of the empirical part of project will contribute to the creation of innovative potential of gender equality policies in both countries through a critical reflection on the existing policies of GE in Poland and Norway, as well as at the European level. The goal is to advance the capacity to go beyond an "export" and "from above" model of GE, towards a model which is country-sensitive and relies on internal and "from below" processes as well as external inputs. Through analysis of GE policies, interviews and survey questions, we will analyse the actual impact of the policies, including reasons why some policies and reforms gain more popular support, and are more effective, than others. Our hypothesis is that although the success of GE reforms is influenced by cultural attitudes, the problems people experience in daily life (eg. parents using parental leave) are also a major determinant. The research results will form the basis for discussions in policy workshops (in PL and Norway) and further for policy recommendations.

Methods and approach

The project method is building on a Norwegian approach, placing GE in focus, that has been successfully developed over the last decades. The first version of the gender-equal



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research approach was made in Sweden (Jalmert 1984), followed up by a small survey on men and GE in Norway by Holter, leading to qualitative Norwegian and Nordic studies in the 1990s and 2000s, and to the large survey in 2007 (300 variables, Holter et al 2009). The survey made in a national context soon proved translatable: the international project IMAGES run in 12 countries (e.g. Brazil, India), successfully adapting the approach (Barker et al 2011). The current project follows up on this development: the goal is not just to apply a Norwegian model, but to advance it in terms of cultural and national sensitivity and realism, with research as well as policy objectives, especially regarding Polish, Norwegian and European development. Poland will be the 'test case', with work/family reconciliation as the central theme – as the survey will be run in Poland. The approach and methods are developed so to ensure that the project fulfills its main goal of advancing research on GE development and clarify connections of GE to quality of life and social development. The most important part is the survey research, backed up by the secondary data analysis, policy analysis and qualitative research, thereby improving the validity of overall results. GE is investigated, firstly through qualitative methods (FGI-focus group interviews with projection techniques), exploring attitudes, practices and gender power relations within different life areas (like education, work and family), using daily life oriented questions including actions, choices, experiences, norms and values regarding GE. FGI will be directed to the groups that have little say in GE policies and are not reached by specific GE interventions, groups of different social classes, experiencing social exclusion, underrepresented, e.g. rural women, entrepreneurs, people from lower social class, different categories of men. FGI is a very good method for preparation of survey questionnaire, so pretests of questionnaire will be done during FGIs. The qualitative research of the project will improve knowledge in the selected areas, explore GE concepts, values and practices during FGI and through media analysis, help create a new survey design and new questions, and add to the overall research value of the project. The second empirical method is the survey, including variables related to GE in different life



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spheres as well as key variables in connected to quality of life and social development. Through the focus on work-life balance, the project methodology will be developed in a way which is realistic to respondents (what does GE actually mean in daily life, how does gender work out), as well as nuanced and sensitive when it comes to values, beliefs and traditions. While the pretests will be done both in Poland and Norway, resulting in two language versions of the questionnaire, the survey will be run in Poland using the funds of the project and the survey in Norway will be run using the external funding. The research will bring into focus GE in different life spheres, including family, work, resources allocation, free time and unpaid work, noticing interdependence and permeation of private and public spheres, as well as different levels of GE (attitudes and values, practices and responsibilities, power relations). The project will give a much improved map of existing inequalities, identifying innovation and change potentials, especially related to quality of life and social development. Both the survey and the qualitative part of the project will include development variables, partly using the best existing variables from recent research, partly creating new ones from the GE perspective. Three main subdimensions will be mapped: efficiency, social innovation and human capital basing on the earlier Nordic projects on gender equality and innovation, including welfare economics (Holter 2007, Sen 1999). Other important elements of the methodological approach are: a life course perspective considering impact of life experiences, events and transitions on GE in different life dimensions, as well as intergenerational approach considering the relations and consecutiveness of the generations as well as care networks, and men focus. Men and masculinities are crucial part of the theory focus as well as the method development, including men's changing roles and the impact that inequality practices have on men's health and well-being. Finally, our project will address gender intersectionally especially in relation to age, social class, and culture including beliefs and religion, as well as urban and rural setting.



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Description of the Project Plan

The project will start with the review of the existing research and literature concerning GE in order to examine the existing GE frameworks and their theoretical and methodological aspects (WP1). At the same time, Polish and Norwegian policy analysis will be conducted (WP2). This step will help us identify the areas of potential improvement for GE as far as policy area is concerned, which will be later necessary for formulating policy recommendations in WP8. On the basis of results from WP1 and WP2, empirical study will be conducted. The qualitative study on meanings, concepts and value of gender equality in Poland (WP3) will create a basis for the creation of the survey tool. Simultaneously, the work on the new survey methodology and tool will proceed (starting in WP1 and continuing in WP4) aiming at improvement of the existing tool through the results of state of art (WP1), policy analysis (WP2), and qualitative research (WP3). The pretest controlling the quality and validity of the questionnaire and testing questions will take place both in Poland and Norway, so the results of the WP4 will be two questionnaire versions (Polish and Norwegian). When the survey methodology will be ready, the gathering of the data will start (WP5) – the survey will be conducted in Poland by the outsourced company supervised by the Polish partner. While, a Norwegian version of the survey will be developed together with the Polish version, the survey in Norway will be carried out using an external funding. WP6 will concentrate on the Polish survey data analysis. The results of the analysis will be presented in different forms (report, conference presentations, journal articles), and will be a very important input for WP7 ‘Reinventing the GE framework’. The aim of WP7 is to gather the knowledge produced during the project for the reflection on GE Framework produced in WP1 (and creation of the English version of the questionnaire for European use), as well as for the creation of the final report of the project. The GE Framework elaborated in the project will be ‘translated’ into policy setting in WP8 ‘Gender mainstreaming and policy



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outcomes' – the implication of new GE will be discussed during the seminars as well as put into academic and policy debate during the summer school for young researchers resulting in policy recommendations and tools for policy makers in Poland and Norway. The project will build capacity for future research on GE promoting new approach for studying of GE (WP10).

Capacity building

Creation of potential for future advancement in Gender Equality research: realized through engaging a PhD candidate (in Poland) and two post-doc researchers (one in Poland and one in Norway), organizing a summer school for young researchers and encouraging exchange between Polish and Norwegian researchers. Post-doc positions will belong to the core research team engaged in all of scientific project activities. However, they will be also encouraged to look for potential new approaches and contexts of investigating gender equality that will feed into the central research question with nuances and additional contexts. The doctoral student in Poland position will linked Polish and Norwegian research team sharing the time between Poland and Norway. PhD candidate will support core researchers in the project activities with special emphasis on the qualitative study. The doctoral candidate will develop a doctoral thesis basing on the outcomes of GEQ. The advancement of PhD candidate in his/her research will be documented by the reports to be delivered to the coordinator of WP9. The PhD candidate is obliged to submit draft of 50% of the thesis by the end of the project. WP will also aim at strengthening cooperation between Poland and Norway through mobility of academics (study visits in Krakow and Oslo) and at developing a network of academics working towards new framing of GE during the summer school for PhD students and post doc



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researchers from Norway and Poland (concentrating at discussing new GE framework and translating it into policy).



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