



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



**POLISH-NORWEGIAN
RESEARCH
PROGRAMME**



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Gender Equality policies in Norway and Poland: Building better societies, exported good or imposed regulation?

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Main questions:

- What is the content of the gender equality policies in Norway and Poland?
- Which gender equality measures are “exported” and which are not?
- What are the implications of adopting the gender equality in Poland?
- What are the implications for Norway as an export country?
- Can the Norwegian gender equality policy export be interpreted as a kind of Western imperialism?

Norway as a model country for gender equality?

- Strong welfare state based on high employment rate, including for mothers, high fertility rate
- World Economic Forum:
“Because women account for one-half of a country’s **potential talent base**, a **nation’s competitiveness** [...] depends significantly on whether and how it **educates and utilizes its women**”
(<http://www.weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap>)

Norway as a model country for gender equality?

Norwegian government: the aims of the gender equality policy are to:

- “give women and men equal formal rights and combat all discrimination”
- “ensure genuine equality between women and men through equal distribution of goods, responsibility and power”
- “consider gender in the context of ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities, age and class”
- Areas: commercial markets, work life, education, kindergartens; household tasks, national and regional politics, health, violence against women, international politics.

Development of Gender equality policies in Poland

- Gender equality as a “**reminiscent of communist time**”
- Transformation and **neoliberal reforms** (Structural Adjustment Programme)
- **EU directives on gender mainstreaming** after 200
- Areas: labour market (work-life balance, kindergartens, retirement benefits), political participation, stereotypes and education, violence against women, access to goods and services

Equality law in Poland

- Introduction of the **Plenipotentiary for Equal Status of Women and Men** in 2001 (disbanded in 2005)
- Reinstated the Office of **Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment** in 2008
- No implementation of **Equality Act** – only “Act on implementation of some provision of the European Union concerning the principle of equal treatment”
- No aims of gender equality in “Poland 2030” but gender equality included in “National Action Programme for the Equal Treatment for year 2013-2016”

Norwegian gender equality policy as exported good. Good practices adopted in Poland

- Moderate version of the Norwegian “**daddy quota**”: paternity leave (2010), additional maternity and parental leave (2013)
- **Gender quotas in listed public company boards: 30% by 2015**
- **EEA/Norway grants** funding of gender equality research, shelters for battered women

Norwegian equality measures not exported to Poland

- Abortion rights
- Marketing Act forbidding sexist advertising
- Sex Purchase Act
- Kindergarten Act

Implication of adopting the gender equality measures in Poland

- EU or international measures and acts (such as CEDAW) used by feminists and women's groups in order to legitimize their struggles for a new gender order.
- Opposition by the Catholic Church, nationalists and radical right: “gender ideology” and “genderism”
- ✓ “Stop gender ideology” Parliamentary Committee (Beata Kempa);
- ✓ “Gender ideology is the product of many decades of ideological and cultural changes that are deeply rooted in the Marxism and neo-Marxism endorsed by some feminist movements, and also the sexual revolution. (...) It maintains that biological sex is not socially significant and that cultural sex, which humans can freely develop and determine irrespective of biological conditions, is most important. (...) The danger of gender ideology lies in its very destructive character both for mankind, personal contact and social life as a whole. Humans unsure of their sexual identity are not capable of discovering and fulfilling tasks that they face in their marital, family, social and professional lives” (Pastoral Letter of the Bishops' Conference of Poland).

Implications of the gender equality “export” in Norway

- Norwegian self-righteousness image of being World Champion of gender equality *hinders* the realization of concrete measures to promote gender equality *within* Norway.

Norwegian gender equality policy “export” a kind of Western imperialism?

- Gender equality “products” represent only a small part of Norwegian transfers.
- “Exported” gender equality “products” are basically uncontroversial and apolitical, promoting financial profitability, utilizing talents.

Thank you for your attention

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