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## **STATE MECHANISMS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IN NORWAY**

I am a sociologist, the last years my research has concentrated on gender and power in academia – in Norway and Montenegro. The last year I have been teaching an English course at the Centre: Gender Equality in the Nordic countries.

My talk will focus mainly on women in politics, but I will also say a little about women in the boards of enterprises in Norway. When discussing women in politics, I will refer to some important years in the development of women's representation in politics (se appendix).

**Situation in Norway** at moment: more than 35% of women in the municipal assemblies and parliament, and more than 40% of women in the county councils.

We have recently had elections, where the parties to the left won and will establish a new government very soon. I am sure 45% of ministries will be women. Actually 47% of the ministers are women (9 out of 19), and we have our first woman as minister of finance.

*There are women ministers in the following ministries:*

Finance

Local Government and Regional Development

Defence

Environment

Transport and Communications

Children and Equality

Health and Care Services

Renewal and Government Administration

Fisheries and Coastal policies

***There are men ministers in the following ministries:***

Prime minister  
 Foreign affairs  
 Petroleum and Energy  
 International Development  
 Trade and Industry  
 Education and Research  
 Labour and Social Affairs  
 Culture and Church Affairs  
 Agriculture and Food

The relatively full inclusion of women in politics in Norway can be explained by two strategies: Bottom-up pressure (from civil society/NGOs) in combination with top-down initiatives (from political leaders).

Another reason for the relatively high representation of women in politics is the perception of democracy in Norway: Since long time ago, the principle of representation of different interests, represented by regional representation has been a central value. Regional representation implies that it is accepted that there are different interests between people living in coastal versus inland districts and between south and north. This means that it matters who speaks. Thus, representation from all regions should be assured. This logic is also applicable to women's representation, as women are perceived as having some interests in common, like reproductive rights and the right to live without the threat of violence in the family.

The main arguments for the inclusion of women are thus:

1. Exclusion of women – in reality as well as formally represents a democratic deficit.
2. Women as a group have different experiences and interest form those of men.

An important feature of Norwegian political life is that as women started to be better represented, they were perceived as almost equally competent as men. But every time a woman enters a new domain, there questions as to her competence seems to arise.

Another important factor is that the media and the public discuss these issues. Decent people and institutions may

be ashamed when it is publicly known that women in reality are left out from positions. This was the case before the first leap in women's representation in politics in 1967, and this was the case when the University of Oslo realised that only 5% of the newly appointed professors were men in 2003.

Some important moments:

Before the municipal elections in 1967, the male leader of a centrist party expressed worry because less than 5% in the municipal assemblies were women. On his initiative, a committee with representatives from all political parties (we did not have a populist party at that time) as well as from women's organisations launched a campaign in the media and through the parties and organisations to increase women's representation. The result was 9,7% women elected (appendix 2). This is a good example of the combination of top-down and bottom-up strategies.

1971: Women's organisations campaigned for women in municipal assemblies and organised common strategy to increase women's representation by changing the lists of the political parties: in three municipalities, also in the capital, women gained the majority, in six other municipalities between 40 and 50% were women. This was a pure bottom-up strategy.

Then there was a rather slow increase in women's representation until 1977. But in 1975 the newly established Leftist Socialist Party established a quota of at least 40% women as candidates on their lists for elections to public assemblies, and in 1977 a women's political campaign demanded 50/50 representation at the elections for Parliament as well as a more women-friendly politics. The result was a new leap in women's representation to the Parliament: from 15,5% to 23,9%, and women from different political parties joined forces on some political questions together with women's NGOs – and were listened to. During the last part of the 1970s several institutions for gender equality were established: municipal committees for gender equality, The Gender Equality Act, a department for gender equality established within the Ministry for family affairs and the Gen-

der equality ombudsman (independent of political authorities) (appendix 1).

Even if there was stagnation from 1977–1985, Norway had its first women as Prime minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland from the Labour Party from 1981. During her first period as Prime minister, the Gender Equality Act is strengthened with a quota system: all public boards, committees etc. were to appoint at least 2 persons from the underrepresented sex and a national Action plan for gender equality is launched.

In 1983: The Labour party established a quota of at least 40% women as candidates on their lists for elections to public assemblies. This may be interpreted as a result of the rather good election results of the Leftist Socialist Party: This party started with including women, more women voted for them, and other parties followed after. By 1993 all parties from the centre to the left have established quotas of at least 40% women on their lists for elections to public assemblies.

In 1986 when Gro Harlem Brundtland established her second ministry, this was called the first women ministry in the world, as 44% of the ministers were women. After this government it has been politically illegitimate to have at least 40% women in Government. And Brundtland's third ministry in 1990 had 47% women.

During the first part of the 1990s the Parliament decides that at least 40% of members in all public committees should be women and a White paper from the Government for the states that gender equality and gender perspective should be integrated at all levels in politics (mainstreaming). The 40% quota was rather successful, but the mainstreaming policy was not that successful, and from the beginning of 2000 new initiatives were taken (this time by a conservative government). A new amendment of Gender Equality Act instructed employers and organisations to actively enhance gender equality in working life and a new law states that at least 40% of the members of boards in Public limited companies should be women by 2007.

At the moment 47% of boards of the state big enterprises are women, but in private enterprises only 8% are women.

Two more experiences from Norwegian political life should be mentioned: In the 1980s and later the membership in political parties is reduced in most Nordic countries. However, in Norway, this reduction is less important as women joined the parties to a greater degree, and thus strengthened the parties. Another experience is that our populist party is not interested in gender equality, and has rather few women on their lists. Thus if this party is strengthened in the elections, the representation of women goes down. This is what happened with our Parliamentary elections this year.

### Appendix 1

Historical points of relevance for women's increased participation in Norway.

1959: Council for equal pay is established.

1960ies: A broader engagement for women's rights developed after focus on economic and social consolidation since 1945.

1967: A committee consisting of representatives for all political parties and women's organisations was established with a man as leader. The aim was to increase women's representation in municipal assemblies through information campaign in media, schools and political parties.

1971: Women's organisations campaigned for women in municipal assemblies and organised common strategy to increase women's representation by changing the lists of the political parties: in three municipalities, also in the capital, women gained the majority, in six other municipalities between 40 and 50% were women.

1972: Gender Equality Council is established (independent of political authorities).

1974: The small liberal party established a quota system for internal committees etc. in the party.

1975: A new campaign was launched with only minor results.

1975: The Leftist socialist party established a quota of at least 40% women as candidates on their lists for elections to public assemblies.

1977: A women's political campaign demanded 50/50 representation at the elections for Parliament as well as a more women-friendly politics.

1977: Establishment of the first municipal committee for gender equality (optional). In 1980'ies 300 of 439 municipalities and all counties had established such committees.

1978: Gender equality act was passed in Parliament.

1978: Department for gender equality established within the Ministry for family affairs.

1979: Gender equality ombudsman established (independent of political authorities).

1979: A new campaign was launched for women in municipal assemblies.

1981: First women prime minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland.

1981: The Gender equality act is strengthened: all public boards, committees etc. were to appoint at least 2 persons from the underrepresented sex.

1981: The second national Action plan for gender equality is launched.

1983: The Labour party established a quota of at least 40% women as candidates on their lists for elections to public assemblies.

1986: Gro Harlem Brundtland's second ministry had 44% women.

1986: The second national Action plan for gender equality is launched.

1988: The Gender equality act is strengthened: all public boards, committees etc. were to appoint at least 40% persons from the underrepresented sex.

1989: The Christian people's party established a quota of at least 40% women as candidates on their lists for elections to public assemblies.

1990: Gro Harlem Brundtland's third ministry had 47% women.

1990: Parliament decides that at least 40% of members in municipal committees should be women.

1991: A White paper from the Government for the

1990'ies states that gender equality and gender perspective should be integrated at all levels in politics (mainstreaming).

1993: The Center party established a quota of at least 40% women as candidates on their lists for elections to public assemblies.

2002: New amendment of Gender equality act: Employers and organisations are instructed actively to enhance gender equality in working life.

2003: A new law, saying that at least 40% of the members of boards in Public limited companies should be women.

## Appendix 2

### FIGURES ON WOMEN IN POLITICAL POSITIONS IN NORWAY

*Table 1. Women in Municipality assemblies:*

Year	Percentage of women
1945	3,4
1967	9,5
1971	14,8
1975	15,4
1979	22,8
1983	23,8
1987	31,2
1999	34,4

*Table 2. Women in County assemblies\**

Year	Percentage of women
1975	25
1979	29
1983	33
1999	41,4

\* County assemblies were only established in 1975.

*Table 3. Women in Storting/Parliament*

Year	Percentage of women
1945	4,7
1969	9,6
1973	15,5
1977	23,9
1981	25,8
1985	34,4
2001	37,0
2005	36,0

**Women in Government**

1945	1 woman
1973–81	20–25% women
1986	44% women
1989	47% women

**THE MOST RECENT FIGURES  
ON WOMEN IN POLITICAL POSITIONS**

Municipal councils	1999–2003: 34,3%
County councils	1999–2003: 41,4%
Parliament	2005: 36,0%
Majors (municipalities)	1999–2003: 14,2%
Majors (counties)	1999–2003: 22,2%
Government appointed committees	2001–2005: 42,0%

**WOMEN IN BOARDS OF DIRECTORS 2003**

Public limited companies	7,3%
State owned enterprises	45,7%

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## **ДЕРЖАВНІ МЕХАНІЗМИ НАДАННЯ ПОЛІТИЧНИХ ПОВНОВАЖЕНЬ ЖІНКАМ У НОРВЕГІЇ**

### **Анотація**

У виступі зроблено акцент на участі норвезьких жінок у політиці і підприємницькій діяльності. Станом на сьогодні у цій країні склалася така ситуація: у муніципальних асамблеях і парламенті жінки представлені на рівні 35%, в місцевих радах – на рівні 40%. 47% міністрів – 9 з 19 – жінки, і вперше в історії Норвегії жінка обіймає посаду міністра фінансів. Окрім цього, жінки очолюють міністерства місцевого самоврядування і регіонального розвитку, оборони, охорони довкілля, транспорту і зв'язку, з питань дітей і рівності, охорони здоров'я, рибництва і прибережної політики тощо. Чоловіки представлені: прем'єр-міністром, міністром закордонних справ, палива і енергетики, міжнародного розвитку, торгівлі і промисловості, освіти і науки, праці і соціальних справ, культури і релігії та сільського господарства.

Порівняно широке представництво жінок у норвезькій політиці може бути пояснене двома стратегіями впливу: тиск знизу (громадянського суспільства і громадських організацій) у поєднанні з ініціативами згори (від політичних лідерів). Іншою причиною є норвезький варіант трактування демократії, коли протягом вже тривалого часу принцип представництва різних інтересів був і залишається однією з основних цінностей. Представництво регіонів показує, що допускається можливість різниці інтересів у людей, які живуть на прибережних територіях і всередині країни, а також мешканців півночі і півдня. Так само є важливим представництво жінок, оскільки жінки поділяють певні спільні інтереси (напр., право народжувати дітей

і право жити без загрози жорстокості і насильства в родині).

Таким чином, головними аргументами на користь залучення жінок до політики є те, що:

1. Виключення жінок з політичної сфери є формальним і фактичним дефіцитом демократії в країні.

2. Жінки як група мають інший досвід і інші інтереси, ніж чоловіки.

Автор зазначає основні етапи становлення порівняно високого представництва жінок у політиці і описує події, з якими це було пов'язано.

Щодо представництва жінок у підприємницьких структурах, то в 2000 році було затверджено зміни до законодавства, котрі зобов'язують усі державні компанії включати до складу керівних органів не менш як 40% жінок. На цей момент жінки становлять 47% представників керівних рад великих державних підприємств. Водночас цей показник є значно нижчим на приватних підприємствах (на рівні 8%).

Доповідь доповнено переліком історичних подій, що спричинили поступове вирівнювання ступеня представлення жінок і чоловіків у політиці, а також поточними даними щодо частки жінок в органах влади різного рівня.