

Brand new toolbox for better gender balance in academia

January 6 2023, by Marie Antonsen



The new toolbox contains procedures for systematic work on gender balance, including concrete proposals for measures, survey tools and a resource bank.
Credit: Elin Iversen/NTNU

Vivian Anette Lagesen, a professor at NTNU's Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture, has been asked many times what works to achieve gender balance in academia. Her answer is always, "It depends."

"It's not the [answer](#) that people, and more specifically managers, want, but it's still the answer we have to give," says Lagesen.

"What's the challenge in your department? That's the first thing you need to figure out. If you're going to change anything in an institution, you have to know the place well to be able to identify the problem or problems. Then you can take action to make changes. This applies to [gender balance](#) as well," says Lagesen.

Change is easier said than done, of course, but the doing has now become a little easier. With [funds](#) from the Research Council of Norway's BALANSE program, the researchers in the GENDIM project at NTNU have developed a toolbox for [equality](#) and gender balance at universities and colleges.

Tools are available to all

GENDIM stands for Understanding gender imbalances among university professors: The shaping and reshaping of epistemic living spaces.

The toolbox contains procedures for systematic efforts to improve gender balance, with an extensive menu of concrete proposals for measures, mapping tools and a resource bank.

[gendim.no](#) was launched at the recent conference on the topic of "Gender and academia: Towards BALANCE?" under the auspices of the Research Council. The tool is now accessible and will be tested before final adjustments are made early in 2023.

Tailored to academia

The toolbox will help leaders in academia at the department level,

faculty level and top management to incorporate equality and inclusion work into their daily functions.

The toolbox will be of help in ongoing organizational change and can also be used as a starting point to discuss new initiatives and raise awareness of equality and challenges with gender balance at the institution.

"The tools we've developed are tailored to academia," says researcher Ivana Suboticki, who has led the project to create a digital solution for the toolbox.

"There are still gender imbalances in different parts of academia, especially in higher positions, so we've used all the knowledge we already have about gender balance and equality and shaped it into something that can be used by NTNU as well as other universities and colleges," she said.

The researchers used Spire Consulting, which is run and owned by students at NTNU, to develop the digital version of the toolbox.

"It's pretty cool that the project has been developed at NTNU from top to toe," says Ivana Suboticki.

Check out the toolbox [here](#).

Next step: The Diversity Toolbox

"Now we're in the process of developing a similar toolbox for [diversity](#) in academia," says Lagesen.

This project is being funded by NTNU as part of the Development plan for gender equality and diversity 2023-2025, and will be an important

next step in further developing NTNU's efforts to improve [gender](#) balance.

"How should we work systematically to facilitate, and also be able to use, diversity in [academia](#)? Diversity is a complex issue that requires more research, but we can reuse some of the most important principles from the toolbox for equality for the diversity toolbox," says Lagesen.

These principles include the importance of acquiring more and better knowledge of local conditions and situations, problem understanding, and anchoring the work at all levels of the organization.

Provided by Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Citation: Brand new toolbox for better gender balance in academia (2023, January 6) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-01-brand-toolbox-gender-academia.html>

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