

10 years after: Still NO EQUAL PAY IN NORWAY

The Norwegian Equal Pay Commission
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Norway is recognized world-wide as a country of gender equality.

You may think we have achieved equal pay between men and women:
Well, think again!

Despite the focus on equal pay in the Norwegian wage settlements for the last 30 years, the gender pay gap remains.

Women are in majority in higher education and participate in working life almost at the same level as men.

Still, women get paid less for their competence and effort. And the pay gap is also biggest among professional groups with higher education.

The government-appointed Equal Pay Commission finished their report in 2008. That year the hourly wage gap was estimated to be 15% (percent¹).

The main explanations given by the Commission were:

- **First**, the gender pay gap follows the gender divided labor market. Work mainly performed by women is almost always paid less than work mainly performed by men, even when education, responsibility and effort are comparable.
- **Second**, the Norwegian model for wage negotiations maintain at best the same wage differences.
- **And finally**, the wage gap increases during parenthood.

According to the rapport, the Commission came up with six suggestions: the most controversial were:

- A wage boost for female-dominated-jobs in the public sector
- The parental leave period should be divided into three equally lengthy periods:
 - one for the mother
 - one for the father and
 - one for the family to decide how to useThis after the Icelandic model if I am not mistaken....

¹ But women's income was just 65 per cent of men's income, due to women's part time work.

The Norwegian Nurses Organisation was very happy with the conclusion.

This had been our argument for a long time – now we had a government-appointed Commission saying the same thing.

The Equal Pay Commission's best advice was to raise the wages for the female-dominated professions in the public sector.

Unfortunately, the advice was quickly “forgotten.” The same evening the Commission's report was launched, Jens Stoltenberg (the Prime Minister at that time) – shot down the suggestion on the parental leave.

And he did not mention the wage boosts, nor did anybody else!

Norwegian Governments – of all colors - goes for a “hands off” - strategy.

Leaving the responsibility for solving the equal pay issue **to the social partners**; making equal pay a question limited to sectors.

In 2010 Prime Minister Stoltenberg even said that the national wage negotiations *proved* that the social partners were able to solve the equal pay puzzle.

Well, it turned out that the gap got reduced by 0,3%.

The Norwegian Nurses Organisation, on the other hand, got the attention of the public opinion as the front runner for equal pay. But sadly, it didn't have much effect.

In 2015 the Solberg Government came with their own White Paper called Equality in practice.

The paper just stated that if girls choose male-dominated jobs they will get higher status and better pay. But if boys choose a female-dominated job it means less pay, part-time work and lower status.

Even if there is a will to minimize gender **inequality** in the labor market, there is no political will to use the most efficient instrument: PAY (RISE)

Here we are – ten years after the Equal Pay Commission; with **only a slight reduction** in the gender pay gap.

And hardly no-one mentions equal pay any more.

- The Government leaves it up to the social partners

- The employers reject the idea of a pay problem; the gender pay gap is just a result of different preferences
- And the trade unions never were able to agree on what equal pay was about, not to mention which groups of employees were to be given priority

Even the **United Nation** (UN) express concern about the gender divided labor marked in Norway and the consequences this have for women.

The health workforce shortage is growing by the day and with the coming care challenges of an ageing population, the sector should be made attractive for both young men and women. And not ask woman to leave the sector to achieve equal pay.

Lack of equal pay is a social challenge, cutting across sectors. The social partners will not be able to solve this challenge within the limits of regular wage negotiations,

For women to have more, men must step back. And women themselves must accept the idea of difference between themselves.

Low pay and equal pay are not the same.

Even if nobody else speaks of equal pay anymore **we must keep doing so** – and maybe believe in miracles.

Since a little miracle happened earlier this year when the liberal-conservative government with support from the labor party, agreed on one of the controversial suggestions from the earlier Equal Pay Commission.

Namely the parental leave period will now be divided into three equal periods.

Thank you for your attention!