

Action Plan for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the University of South-Eastern Norway, 2022-2025

1. Introduction

The vision and strategy of the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) both include promoting interpersonal relations and taking global responsibility.

Internationalisation must form an integral part of all aspects of USN's activities. From a global perspective, higher education strengthens the international community and promotes democracy, diversity and sustainable development.

The fact that USN views cultural diversity as both an obligation and a resource in its education and research is a mark of its commitment to taking global responsibility.

Overall objective

Equality is one of the fundamental goals of USN's strategy and this is evident from its activities, which include measures aimed at achieving gender balance in senior scientific posts.

USN's staff and students should, as far as possible, reflect the diversity of Norwegian society. USN must also strengthen its recruitment and R&D-based education and, as part of this work, promote targeted measures aimed at achieving gender balance within the various position categories and academic environments.

USN's goal is to develop a competitive, regionally anchored, entrepreneurial university with high international standards. This will require solid academic competence, a professional management team, a strong working community and close collaboration and partnerships with civil and working life. USN's values are:

- Close and accessible
- Innovative and ambitious
- Relevant, responsible and sustainable

In order for USN to achieve its goals and live up to its values, USN needs to develop inclusive working and learning environments that promote diversity and equality and prevent discrimination. The Action Plan for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is therefore an important document for achieving USN's goals. Based on USN's overarching goals and values, four main objectives are highlighted in the action plan and the measures are intended to help USN achieve these main objectives.

Main objective 1:

USN will be regarded as an attractive place to work and study that reflects the diversity of society.

Main objective 2:

USN will ensure that the perspectives of the Equality and Inclusion Committee (EIC) are integrated into its teaching and research and further developed through competence and training.

Main objective 3:

USN will ensure diverse recruitment and equal career opportunities for all.

Main objective 4:

USN will have a balance of perspectives in management and decision-making.

The action plan's measures must be implemented in the organisation and be reflected in the faculties' action plans. USN wants to make the best possible use of the staff's resources, provide staff with equality of opportunity, be regarded as an attractive place to work and study and ensure access to the best qualified people through a variety of measures.

Equality has traditionally been about gender equality. However, gender is only one of several parameters of inequality in society and the action plan is therefore based on the concept of equality of opportunity in its broader sense.¹ The goal is to achieve good gender and ethnicity balances and ensure equality of opportunity for people with disabilities and different sexual orientations.²

USN considers differences a resource and dissimilarities between people are the source of diversity. In its broader sense, diversity is considered an asset in a socially sustainable society. Research also shows that in most cases diversity has positive effects for an enterprise. Examples of positive internal diversity effects are better problem solving, greater creativity, more flexibility and a strengthening of cultural values and language. External effects include a better reputation and advantages in recruitment.³

USN wants managers and staff to have a better understanding of what diversity management and intercultural competence entail. A better understanding could provide managers with a better basis for releasing, valuing and utilising the potential inherent in diversity.

The action plan also applies to students at USN. USN's responsibilities include both educating students to meet diversity in working life and society with equality and being a safe, inclusive place to study.

USN has been working on several of the measures for some of time and will continue to work on them on an ongoing basis. Some of the measures will be new.

Revision process

The committee that revised the action plan for 2017-2021 met several times in 2021 in connection with the revision work. Among other things, the committee invited the Gender Balance and Inclusion in Research Committee and arranged for several rounds of discussions and reflection on concepts and objectives. The committee has decided that the action plan must be based on documentable practice such that the subsidiary objectives can subsequently be documented, and the efforts evaluated. The committee also decided that the main objective of the measures is higher quality and better working and learning environments at USN.

A proposed new action plan for the period 2022-2025 has been circulated for comments to level 1, 2 and 3 managers, trade unions, safety representatives, the Student Council and other relevant committees.

¹ National origin, skin colour, language, religion and life stance, political views, trade union membership, sexual orientation, disability, age and other factors.

² Age is included in the Inclusive Working Life Action Plan and is therefore omitted here.

³ Forskning.no (<http://forskning.no/arbeid-ledelse-og-organisasjon-demografi/2009/10/mangfold-er-lonnsomt>)

Source data

USN has allocated resources in the Personnel and Organisation Department to work on equality and inclusion. The data on which the statistics are based were obtained from the National Student Database and the percentages of women and men from the Database for Statistics on Higher Education.

Responsible authority

The Director of Personnel and Organisation (Director PO) is responsible for establishing, implementing and following up the action plan and can make any revisions as needed. The action plan forms part of corporate governance and will be followed up in the governance dialogue the management team has with the Director PO.

At the same time, the contribution that individuals make to developing a culture of diversity must not be underestimated. While responsibility for anchoring the action plan's goals and subsidiary objectives lies with the management team, everyone has a responsibility to actively contribute to the work of realising the goals.

The Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act states that employers must explain how the activity duty of employers in section 26 will be fulfilled. It follows from the allocation letter from the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) for 2021 that USN must actively work to promote career opportunities for women and men and facilitate greater diversity.

The Director PO collates the status of the documentation of the measures and the annual status of the follow-up of the measures is reported to the EIC.

Any significant changes to this action plan before 2025 will be presented to the Board.

Legislation and anchoring

There is a statutory prohibition against discrimination in Norwegian working life. The work on promoting diversity is also based on the sector objectives set by the MER.

Protection from discrimination in working life in Norway is ensured through four different Acts:

- The Gender Equality Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender, pregnancy and parental leave⁴
- The Anti-Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, national origin, descent, skin colour, language, religion and life stance.
- The Anti-discrimination and Accessibility Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability. The Act also stipulates requirements regarding individual adaptation in the workplace.
- The Working Environment Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of political views, trade union membership, sexual orientation and age.

The Acts' common denominator is that they prohibit direct and indirect discrimination, as well as harassment.

Direct discrimination is an act, omission or statement where the purpose or effect is that someone, because of their gender, ethnicity, disability, age, religious affiliation and life stance or sexual orientation, is treated worse than others would be treated in a similar situation.

Indirect discrimination is any seemingly neutral act or statement that in actual fact has a worse effect on a person compared with others because of their gender, ethnicity, disability, age, religious affiliation and life stance or sexual orientation.

Harassment is defined as acts, omissions or statements, the purpose or effect of which is to

⁴ Parents are entitled to leaves of absence in connection with childbirth and after childbirth. Parents are also entitled to payments of parental benefit in connection with these leaves of absence, ref. the National Insurance Act.

insult, intimidate, be hostile, degrade or humiliate.

The prohibition against discrimination and harassment applies to all aspects of employment such as advertising positions, appointment, reassignment, promotion, training and other professional development, pay and employment conditions, termination and dismissal.

Activity and reporting duty Activity

Duty

As an employer, USN has a duty to work in a systematic, planned and active manner to promote equal opportunities and prevent discrimination in the university. This entails drawing up and following a strategy with a clearly defined objective and concrete measures, as well as clearly clarifying who is responsible for what.

The work on promoting equal opportunities must form an integral part of all of the university's activities, and at every level. The action plan must provide a basis for the individual unit's equality work and must be reflected in strategic plans and budgets.

Reporting duty

All public and private (with >50 employees) employers must report on the actual status in the enterprise. This includes things such as:

- Planned and implemented measures that promote equal opportunities with respect to gender.
- Planned and implemented measures that promote equal opportunities with respect to ethnicity.
- Planned and implemented measures that promote equal opportunities with respect to disability.

Basic Agreement for the Civil Service

Pursuant to sections 19 and 20, recruitment measures must in particular facilitate diversity among the employees of the enterprise, especially with respect to gender (including women in management positions), ethnicity, disability and age.

If a group mentioned in the final sentence of section 19(1) is underrepresented among the employees in an enterprise or in a specific position category, the employer should encourage people in the underrepresented group to apply in the job advertisement. If there are qualified applicants from the underrepresented group for a specific position, the employer should invite at least one applicant for an interview.

In position categories where one gender is underrepresented, the text of the advertisement should encourage people of the underrepresented gender to apply for the position. For management positions where women are underrepresented, the advertisement text should encourage women to apply for the position. Should several applicants with almost the same qualifications apply, applicants from the gender that is underrepresented in the relevant position category should be preferred.

2. Status report USN

A good gender balance is a goal for the university in management positions, teaching and research positions and technical administrative positions.

In 2021, there were a total of 111 managers in the university at levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 (source: SAP USN). There is a relatively good gender balance in the senior management group with 43% women and among heads of department the percentage of female managers is no less than 75%.

Table 1 Gender balance in management positions as at 01.10.21

	Total FTEs	Percentage of women
Management positions (management group level 2)	14	43%
Heads of department 1)	32.0	75%

1) Includes deputy heads of department

Table 2. Percentage of women in academic positions. (Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DBH))

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Professor	30.7	28.7	31.3	35.2
Docent	39.8	7.9	40.6	43.5
Associate professor	51.6	54.0	48.5	52.7
Senior lecturer	55.1	55.6	55.3	57.7
Lecturer	61.3	60.6	59.7	62.3
Doctoral research fellow 1378 (internal)	70.0	61.8	70.1	65.6
Doctoral research fellow 1017	52.2	52.3	69.6	63.4

Table 3. Percentage of women in other positions. (Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DBH))

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Technical-administrative positions	70.9	68.9	71.3	70.9
Teaching support positions	34.7	36.8	34.8	34.0
Teaching, research and dissemination positions	51.9	52.2	53.2	54.7
Total	56.0	56.0	57.6	58.0

Table 3. Student gender balance 2020 (Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DBH))

Faculty	Women	Men
Faculty of Health and Social Sciences	3,160	555
Faculty of Humanities, Sports and Educational Science	5,070	1,840
Faculty of Technology, Natural Sciences and Maritime Sciences	620	2015
School of Business	2,370	2,435
TOTAL	11,220	6,845

Ethnic diversity

USN's objectives are to increase its understanding and acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to manage diversity in order to release

the potential inherent in it. As at 01.01.20, immigrants and people who were Norwegian-born to immigrant parents represent 18.2% of the Norwegian population.

USN has not surveyed the percentage of employees with an ethnic origin other than Norwegian since this is not registered in our computer systems. New this year is the fact that during semester registration USN asked whether students have a first language other than Norwegian, and 2,690 confirmed that they did.

Please refer to the [Charter & Code](#) Action Plan, which contains measures related to reducing any language barriers for international employees and ensuring international employees are looked after.

Universal design⁵

As an employer, USN has a duty to implement measures that ensure people with disabilities are able to take or keep jobs, perform and prosper in their work and have access to training and other professional development. This is ensured through Acts and Regulations regarding universal design that mean that the enterprise’s general, physical amenities, including ICT, must be designed such that they can be used by as many people as possible. USN complies with the statutory requirement for universal design, ref. the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act.

One also has to facilitate this at an individual level with the relevant person.

3. Measures related to the areas of gender, ethnicity, disability and sexual harassment and discrimination

Gender

Background and starting point for objectives related to gender balance

The quantitative targets for gender distribution were formulated with a view to increasing the percentage of the underrepresented gender in the various position categories and programme options. Underrepresentation exists if one gender is represented by less than 40%⁶ in each individual faculty, department, section or position category. USN focuses on gender balance in the individual faculty, or department where this is deemed appropriate.⁷

Management positions

Subsidiary objective	Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
USN will achieve diversity in level 1 and 2 management positions.	Gender and ethnic origin will be taken into account in recruitment processes.	The Board/recommending authority	Ongoing
	Contact relevant academic environments or networks to find qualified applicants and motivate them to apply for vacant positions.	Level 1 and 2 managers	Ongoing
	Use a ‘search committee’ to find qualified candidates. Brief potential candidates about possible management careers in performance assessment interviews.	Director of Personnel and Organisation	Ongoing

⁵ Universal design means designing or adapting the main solution in physical situations, including information and communication technology (ICT), so that an enterprise’s general amenities can be used by as many people as possible, irrespective of disability.

⁶ Basic Agreement for State Employees, section 21(2).

⁷ The Norwegian Anti-Discrimination Tribunal’s decision of 06.01.17 (case 91/2015)

	Equality and diversity will be integrated into all management training and other training provision. Improve awareness of unconscious 'bias'.	Director of Personnel and Organisation Level 1 and 2 managers	Ongoing Ongoing
USN will have diversity in level 3 and 4 management.	Gender and ethnic origin will be taken into account in recruitment processes.	Level 1 and 2 managers	Ongoing

Associate positions and research

Subsidiary objective	Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
USN will achieve gender balance in professor and docent positions.	Prepare statistics showing the scope of teaching, equivalent production, distribution of research funds and grants for professional travel distributed by gender and correct any imbalances.	Vice-Rector for R&D/Vice-Rector for Education and Quality of Education	Annual
	Contact relevant academic environments or networks to find qualified applicants and motivate them to apply for vacant positions.	Dean/ heads of department	Ongoing
	Use a 'search committee', for example recruitment agencies, academic environments and networks, to find qualified candidates.	Director of Personnel and Organisation	Ongoing
	Qualification programmes for promotion to docent and professor at USN where women are in particular encouraged to apply.	Director of Personnel and Organisation	Ongoing
	Improve awareness of unconscious 'bias'.	Level 1 and 2 managers	Ongoing
USN will achieve gender balance in associate positions.	Gender balance must be taken account of in recruitment.	Heads of department	Ongoing
USN will achieve gender balance in doctoral research fellow positions	Gender balance must be taken account of in recruitment.	Heads of department	Ongoing
USN will focus on gender in research	Regular webinars for researchers on gender perspectives in research.	Director of Research	Ongoing
		Director of Research	

	There is an awareness of gender perspectives in all research applications.		
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Pay

Subsidiary objective	Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
USN will have equal pay for equal work.	<p>Equalisation of unjustified pay differences based on breaches of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act in local pay negotiations.</p> <p>In the case of new appointments, the pay statistics must be referred to when setting salaries.</p>	Director of Personnel and Organisation	Ongoing

Students

Subsidiary objective	Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
USN will work to improve the gender balance among students in all faculties.	USN's recruitment profile for students must appeal to potential students of all genders and with varied backgrounds and cultural affiliations. This must be reflected in the use of images, digital surfaces and materials for potential students.	Director of Communications/ Director of Academic Affairs	Ongoing
	Competence in the programme option and the significance of rhetoric.	Director of Communications	Ongoing
	Measures that help to counter imbalanced gender distribution between applicants and students.	Director of Academic Affairs	Annual
	Prepare annual overviews of gender distribution among applicants and recruited students in the various faculties.	Director of Academic Affairs	Annual

Ethnicity

Recruitment of staff other than managers

Subsidiary objective	Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
USN will have full-time and temporary staff with immigrant backgrounds and who are Norwegian-born to immigrant parents.	Diversity will be taken into account in recruitment processes.	Director of Personnel and Organisation	Ongoing
	Include a 'diversity statement' in all advertisement texts.	Director of Personnel and Organisation	Ongoing
	USN will encourage people with an immigrant background or who are Norwegian-born to immigrant parents to apply for advertised positions.	Director of Personnel and Organisation	Ongoing
	USN will actively use Scholars at Risk to include academics who are refugees.	Director of Personnel and Organisation	During 2022
	USN will offer Norwegian courses to new employees with Norwegian as a second language.		

Students

Subsidiary objective	Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
USN will increase the proportion of students with an immigrant background or who are Norwegian-born to immigrant parents	Diversity perspectives will be highlighted at Open Days, targeted at upper secondary school students.	Vice-Rector for Education and Quality of Education	Ongoing
	Develop adapted learning activities and guidance for students with Norwegian as a second language.		
	Possible experience sharing with Onboarding Learning Alliance (OLA), the learning facilitator project.		

Diversity management

Subsidiary objective	Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
USN will improve its expertise in diversity and diversity management in order to release the potential inherent in diversity.	Diversity work will be discussed regularly in management meetings and IDF meetings.	Director of Personnel and Organisation	Ongoing
	Skills development for managers, staff and students within intercultural competence and diversity management, including how to include people with disabilities in work and studies.	Director of Personnel and Organisation in cooperation with the	Annual
	Arrange webinars and experience sharing for staff with the theme intercultural competence and diversity management.	Director of Academic Affairs	
	Participation in annual network conferences about equality and diversity. Managers will be encouraged to participate.		
	Diversity management will be integrated into the university's overall competency plan and be made compulsory for managers at all levels and for selected target groups, such as employee representatives, safety representatives, student representatives and PO advisers.	Director of Personnel and Organisation	Ongoing

Disability

Subsidiary objective	Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
USN's teaching and teaching materials will be universally designed.	Training within the universal design of ICT.	Director of Infrastructure	Ongoing
USN will through provisions work for universal design and work on the rehabilitation of old buildings.	Overview of buildings that require universal design and upgrading.	Director of Infrastructure	Ongoing

Sexual harassment and discrimination

Subsidiary objective	Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
No staff or students will experience sexual harassment or discrimination.	Increased awareness of language use and everyday discussions about it.	All staff and students	Ongoing
	Invite Rosa Kompetanse (association for gender and sexual diversity) and other relevant stakeholders to give talks to managers, staff, employee representatives and safety representatives, as well as elected student officers.	Director of Personnel and Organisation	Ongoing
	Information about USN's whistleblowing procedures (SPEAK UP) (sexual harassment).		
	Greater skills development in the academic environment about the possible occurrence of sexual harassment during supervised professional training.		

Strategic anchoring

The equality and inclusion perspective must be anchored strategically such that the entire organisational culture and university environment is characterised by diversity and inclusion.

Subsidiary objective	Measures	Responsibility	Deadline
The equality and inclusion perspective will be integrated in all planning work at USN.	The Equality and Inclusion Committee (EIC) will be consulted on a par with the units and civil servant unions in all planning cases submitted for consultation.	Director of Personnel and Organisation	Ongoing
	The equality and inclusion perspective will be implemented in the university's advertisement texts.		