

Introduction

Legal counselling for women (JURK) is a non-profit organization that offers free and customized legal aid to anyone who defines themselves as women. Our organisation is run by law students. We provide legal aid through:

- Casework in which we assist clients in specific cases.
- Right to Information through which we aim to raise awareness. We work actively to reach target groups through lectures and brochures that covers different areas of law: for example tenancy law, immigration law, introduction to Norwegian law, violence against women. We focus specifically on reaching minorities and women in vulnerable situations.
- Legal policy work: we work politically through lobbying, preparing hearings, arranging seminars and debates. The goal is to improve women's legal position.

We are 24 students, divided in 4 groups according to law areas that we specialise in:

- Immigration and housing
- Family- inheritance and child law
- Employment law, social law and discrimination law.
- Prison law, debt and violence.

Gender perspectives at the law faculty

As law students, we experience that there is little focus on gender perspectives in law studies. A gender perspective could help us gain insight in the interaction between law and society; the effects formal equality could have on both genders, and how to deal with cases in which inequality is the consequence of formally gender-neutral laws.

In Norway, we have formal equality. There are no laws that directly discriminate against women. However, in our work we see that equality is not always a reality. We deal with numerous cases in which the law affects women particularly negatively. We learn that the law is not just legal texts; it is also about society. We see how the law can affect women and men, in addition to minorities and individuals of different social classes. We learn through these cases that formal equality is not always the solution, and that in many areas the law does not embrace women as it is supposed to do.

In the following, we will present samples of legal questions we dealt with where the law affected women particularly negatively:

- Work assessment allowance (AAP)
- Continued residence permit on independent grounds because of abuse and how it affects women in particular.
- Immigration laws that set requirements for income in order to apply for a permanent residence permit and a family immigration.
- Private child law and questions related to partnership and cohabitations.
- The au-pair scheme: since almost every au-pair in Norway is a woman, the scheme affects women differently than men.

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Reflections

Sadly, learning about gender perspective during law school is optional. Those who are interested in the question gender and law are referred to electives, either courses or NGOs like JURK. The theoretical study of law concentrates on how the law is, while practical work gives insight on how the law should be. It teaches us to think critically. We feel that this experience should be an integrated part of law school, not an optional part.

Susan Arulanantham & Assia Chelaghma
Caseworkers - JURK