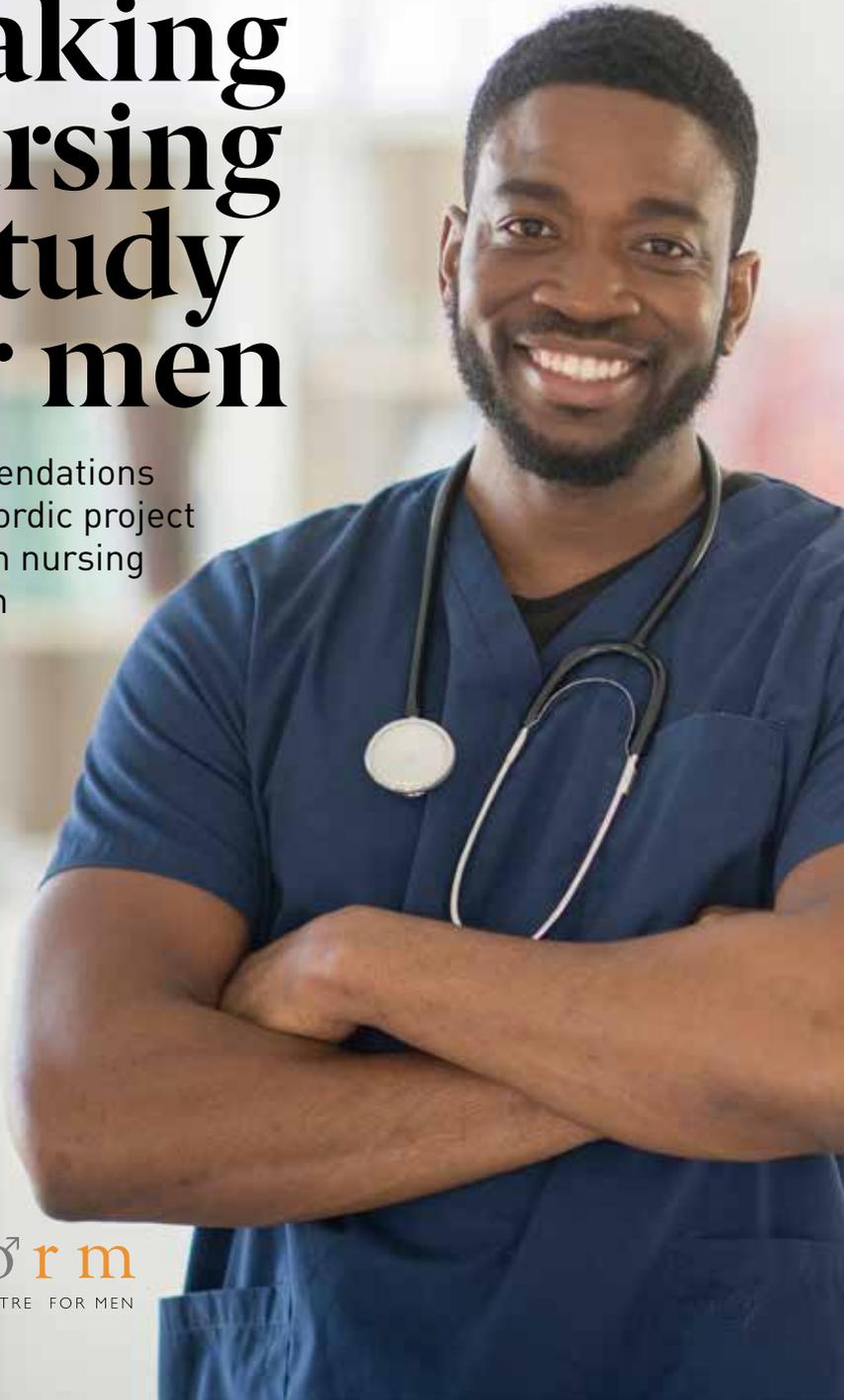


# Making nursing a study for men

Recommendations  
from a Nordic project  
on men in nursing  
education



It doesn't  
happen if we  
do nothing

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# Men as nurses? Yes! But how?

Challenging gender-traditional educational choices so that people's competencies can be used in the best possible way is important if we are to create a sustainable, diverse, and more gender equal working life.

—WHILE WOMEN are increasingly entering traditionally male-dominated professions such as law and medicine, men are not entering female-dominated professions in the same way.

—MEN ARE underrepresented in care professions in all the Nordic countries, and this is especially true in nursing. Men make up only 2 % of nurses in Iceland, 4 % in Denmark, and 10 % in Norway.

Low enrolment and high dropout among male nursing students suggest that educational institutions can do more to recruit and retain men.

In this project, partners in Norway, Denmark and Iceland have gathered data on how nursing is being taught at individual schools, and how male students are being accommodated in the study program.

Based on this, we have developed a set of general recommendations for gender-sensitive practices and initiatives. The main recommendations are being presented in this brochure. By taking an active use of them, we believe it is not only possible to increase the number of male students and decrease drop-out among the group – it's going to happen. But real changes has to be made, both in mindset and in practice.

# Recommended measures



[ 1 ]

## COMMITMENT

Several of the nursing education programs that have a higher proportion of male students, have leadership that has advocated this.

- Measureable percentage for numbers of male students and male teachers at the university should be set
- It must be clear why it should be a commitment, and what goals the initiative has, what resources are allocated, and who is responsible
- Employees and students must be part of the initiative



[ 2 ]

## KNOWLEDGE

Many managers and staff at the institutions have little knowledge about research and initiatives for increasing the number of male nursing students. Knowledge is essential.

- There should be development and use of updated statistics on admission, drop-out, delay in course of study and completion connected to gender of students in nursing education
- Education programmes should have procedures for documenting explanations of dropout and use these to improve their own practice
- Educations should actively use and invite researchers to shed light on gender, diversity and recruitment
- Educators should themselves take initiative to exchange experiences with other nurse educators on the work on improving gender balance

[ 3 ]

## MARKETING

The webpages and recruitment material of nursing educations are important channels of information and recruitment to potential nursing students.

- Pictures and language in webpages and recruitment material should be diverse, and depict nurses of all genders and ethnic backgrounds
- Webpages and recruitment material should show how intricate and imperative the profession really is – not only as caregivers
- Webpages and recruitment material could display personal accounts from male nursing students, showing that the nursing programs are suitable also for men
- Faculty should refrain from addressing the group of students as “girls” and avoid depicting the vocation as something stereotypically feminine

[ 4 ]

## CONTENT AND STUDY MATERIALS

The curriculum students are subjected to are often having little gender diversity in both language and depiction of nurses and students. This has impact in shaping the values and attitudes towards gender equality in nursing.

- Language and pictures in textbooks should open up to a new reality where nursing as a vocation is no longer reserved for (Caucasian) women
- Faculty choosing the curriculum should be aware of how gender and ethnicity is depicted in textbooks and make decisions accordingly
- Faculty should talk about the gendered language and pictures used in textbooks with students in class - and be aware of their own language, as not to reproduce this stereotypical gendered language
- Education institutions should consider placing 1st year students in clinical practice in other clinical situations than nursing homes. Some male students are not prepared for these placements
- Sexual harassment and racism should be explicitly discussed in curriculum and practice
- Language training and linguistic support for minority students should be offered

[ 5 ]

### GENDER CULTURE

The collective representations of women, men, and gender in the student body, as well as in the group of teachers, will influence the way nurses are being perceived. A gendered perception of “the nurse” will therefore be of importance.

- The education institutions should prevent gender cultures that narrow what it means to be a male nursing student, as well as a female student
- Lecturers and teachers should be aware of cultures who place feminine characteristics over masculine in the nursing profession
- Teachers should not always ask men to fix broken machines and equipment, carry heavy items etc.

[ 6 ]

### LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Several nursing education programs have a significantly higher dropout rate amongst men. Both men and people from ethnic minority backgrounds, can experience alienation and loneliness.

- The educational institution should provide students with access to gender assigned ward-ropes and changing rooms
- Faculty must raise own awareness of male nursing students experiencing their campus life being a gender minority
- Male students should have the opportunity to be placed in the same class or study group
- To lower the threshold for male students to contact each other, a yearly gathering reserved for the male student body is suggested



[ 7 ]

### NURSING UNIONS

The National Nursing unions are important agents in the work for diversity and improved gender balance.

- Nursing Unions should include diverse profiling and depictions of nurses in all channels
- Unions should continue the important work of raising the status and salary of nurses, without stating that payroll is the only reason why men refrain from choosing nursing

[ 8 ]

### GOVERNMENTS' RESPONSIBILITY

Nursing educations can do a lot. At the same time Nordic governments have to set themselves goals, followed by structural measures. The signal effect of a clear governmental commitment should not be underestimated – «yes, our country want more men to become nurses!»

- To ensure a significant development in the recruitment of male nurses, we recommend the development of national action plans in all Nordic countries to recruit more men to nursing and other health- and care giving professions
- Extra admission points for the underrepresented gender have proven to be an effective measure to improve the gender balance in several female-dominated and male-dominated education programs in Norway. Other governments and educational authorities in the Nordic countries are asked to understand how the scheme works, and to try out similar schemes in their own countries
- Authorities should develop projects and initiatives that give more boys, and men, direct knowledge and experience from various care professions
- The Nordic countries should develop a similar model for caring for the elderly and the ill that have been carried out in Bergen in Norway, a project that aims at employing teenagers between 16-18 in summer jobs, with the hope of recruiting more health professionals, especially men, in the future



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For further reading:  
[reform.no/publikasjoner/men-in-nursing-education/](https://reform.no/publikasjoner/men-in-nursing-education/)

