ABSTRACT

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN LEGAL TEXTS

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When reading legal texts in Dutch we are often struck by the absence of feminine word forms. In most cases masculine words are used in a generic, gender neutral way. Theoretically the use of these gender neutral / masculine words should be able to guarantee an equal approach of men and women, but since they are generally referred to using male pronouns, they create a clearly male image. Only in legal texts that specifically concern women, e.g. women’s labour, motherhood and trading in women, do women indeed appear to be explicitly mentioned.
Should there be an alternative and what would its implications be?