

**3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Men and Equal Opportunities**

## **General Considerations**

**Abstract**

**Full Paper**

*Working Paper*

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## Abstract

Despite the fact that legal gender equality has been achieved to a large extent, the progression towards equal life histories and employment paths for men and women continues to be a slow process. There is still a long way to go to arrive at actual gender equality.

In this situation, the question of the necessary engagement and involvement of boys, men and fathers is becoming more and more relevant. It is the focus of the series of “International Conferences on Men and Equal Opportunities”. Following the events organised by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs (Berlin 2012) and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs (Vienna 2014), the Luxembourg Ministry for Equal Opportunities will be the host in 2016. The theme of the conference being held on 17/18 October 2016 is:

### Who cares? Who shares?

#### Men as Actors and Beneficiaries in Gender Equality Policies

By focusing on “Caring Masculinities” as a specialised concept, strategic perspective and political agenda, the conference in Luxembourg will open up new outlooks and approaches to the topic. With regard to both subject-specific and political aspects<sup>1</sup>, the conference will examine the highly topical question of which policies can and must create the framework conditions needed to promote greater engagement and involvement of men in care settings – and consequently contribute to the fair and equitable distribution of paid and unpaid work.

“Caring masculinities” opens a wide field comprising aspects such as paternal child care, men’s self-care, sharing of household chores, professional involvement of men in care professions, caring for sick relatives, and men’s volunteer work in municipalities, communities, churches, clubs and associations. Therefore, the theme of the conference not only targets gender equality policies, but also addresses labour, employment, social, health and education policies, and encourages discussions about the potential that “policies for caring masculinities” have in terms of solving political and social challenges extending beyond gender equality.

The Europe 2020 Integrated guidelines for the economic and employment policies of the Member States call for an employment rate of 75% for men and women<sup>2</sup>. At present, the labour force participation rate is 75% for men and 63.5% for women<sup>3</sup>. In the EU, however, women spend 17 more hours on unpaid work than men each week (26 hrs. v 9 hrs.), while men work seven more hours at paid jobs (33 hrs. v 40 hrs.) and earn an average of 16% more per hour than women for the same job. Although the reasons for this inequality are complex, the gender equality goal is easy to define: the fair and equitable – i.e. 50-50 – distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Report on the State of the World's Fathers* ([www.sowf.men-care.org](http://www.sowf.men-care.org)) and the *Engendering Men: Evidence on Routes to Gender Equality* study (<https://www.ids.ac.uk/project/engendering-men-evidence-on-routes-to-change-for-gender-equality-emerge>).

<sup>2</sup> See Europe 2020 Integrated guidelines for the economic and employment policies of the Member States, Guideline 7: Increasing labour market participation and reducing structural unemployment. <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/Brochure%20Integrated%20Guidelines.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6823708/3-07052015-AP-EN.pdf/7e507ea0-43c7-452f-8e6a-b479c89d2bd6>

## The Conference

- presents the current realities with regard to care settings and highlights the diversity of men's contributions to care activities and work;
- explores the causes and potential for change in the complex interplay between individual and family, politics, society and economy;
- calls for conducive framework conditions and political influence both within and beyond gender equality policies;
- formulates recommendations for targeted, evidence-based work-life balance policies;
- supports boys, men and fathers as agents of gender equality policy change;
- networks politics, administration, business and civil society, and promotes dialogue between stakeholders involved in women's and men's policy issues;
- sends a signal to encourage and advocate boys, men and fathers to assume their equal share of responsibility in care settings.

The conference kicks off on 17 October 2016 at 2:00 pm and ends on 18 October 2016 at 5:00 pm. Attendance at the conference is free. Attendees are responsible for their own travel and accommodation expenses.

## Full Paper

The Luxembourg Ministry for Equal Opportunities is organising the 3rd International Conference on Men and Equal Opportunities to be held on 17-18 October 2016. The two previous conferences took place in Berlin (2012) and Vienna (2014), and were hosted by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs. The conference in Luxembourg also expands the scope to include invitees and participants from non-German speaking areas for the first time.

The Luxembourg conference will explore the topic of “Caring Masculinities”, and with regard to both subject-specific and political aspects<sup>4</sup>, will focus on the highly topical question of which policies can and must create the framework conditions needed to promote greater engagement and involvement of men in care settings – and consequently contribute to the fair and equitable distribution of paid and unpaid work. In addition to gender equality policies, the conference will also particularly address labour, employment, social, health and education policies.

### Facts and Figures

In the EU countries, men spend an average of nine hours on **unpaid household and family work** per week, 17 fewer hours than women<sup>5</sup>. Even though men assume varying shares of unpaid work in the individual countries (between 15% and 40%), unpaid work is not equally shared by men and women in any country – not even in Scandinavia.

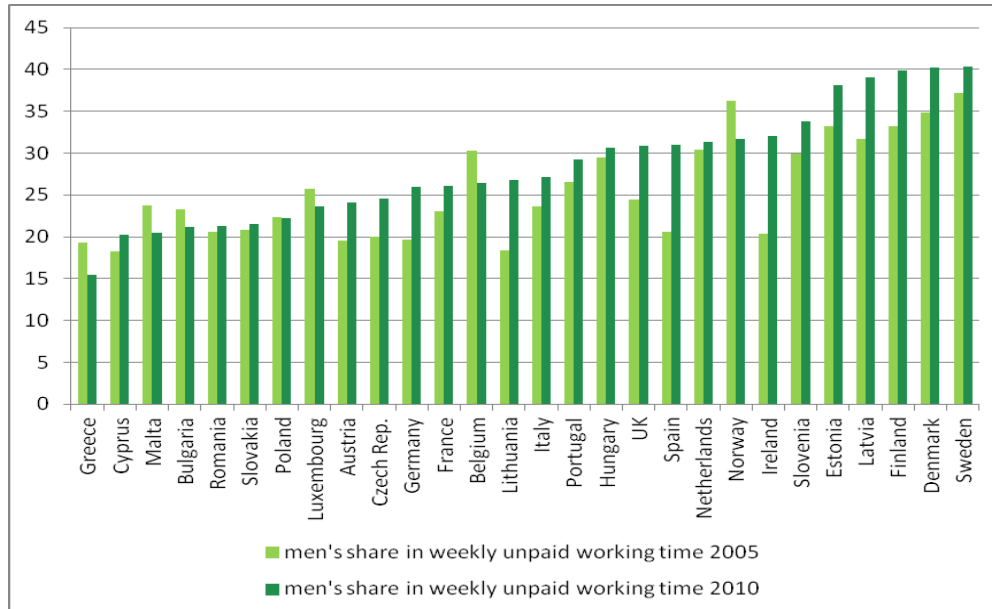


Figure 1: Men's share in unpaid working time per week (in %)<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See *Report on the State of the World's Fathers* ([www.sowf.men-care.org](http://www.sowf.men-care.org)) and the *Engendering Men: Evidence on Routes to Gender Equality* study (<https://www.ids.ac.uk/project/engendering-men-evidence-on-routes-to-change-for-gender-equality-emerge>).

<sup>5</sup> European Commission (2014). *Report on Equality between Women and Men*

<sup>6</sup> EWCS 2005 and EWCS 2010; EWCS 2005. Cited in Scambor et al. (2012, 81)

In the EU countries, men work an average of 40 hours a week at **paid jobs**, 6.9 hours more than women<sup>7</sup>. The smallest differences in this regard are found in countries where the material security of the family would be difficult to ensure without the full-time employment of both parents. In the EU, men earn 16% more per hour of paid employment than women<sup>8</sup>. Overall, the economic costs of the gender employment gap across the EU are estimated at 325 billion euros annually, commensurate to 2.5% of the EU gross domestic product (GDP)<sup>9</sup>.

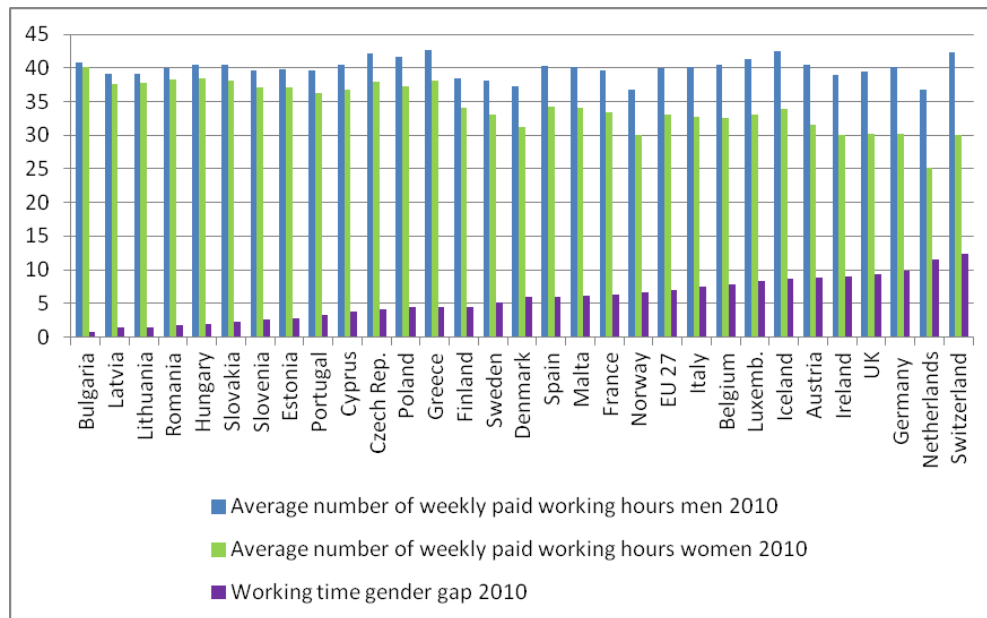


Figure 2: Paid working time per week, by gender (in hours)<sup>10</sup>

The strong employment-focused orientation is not always a good fit with the desires of the men themselves. Men consistently report a less satisfactory balance between professional and private tasks and commitments, especially during the intensive family phase when they are between the ages of 35-49 (see Figure 3)<sup>11</sup>. In general, there is a correlation between (less) working time and job satisfaction. Men with full-time jobs work more overtime and have to deal with more demands on their availability. "The greatest need for change is indicated in the male-dominated manufacturing sectors"<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Scambor et al. (2012). The Role of Men in Gender Equality, p. 45. [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender\\_pay\\_gap/130424\\_final\\_report\\_role\\_of\\_men\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender_pay_gap/130424_final_report_role_of_men_en.pdf)

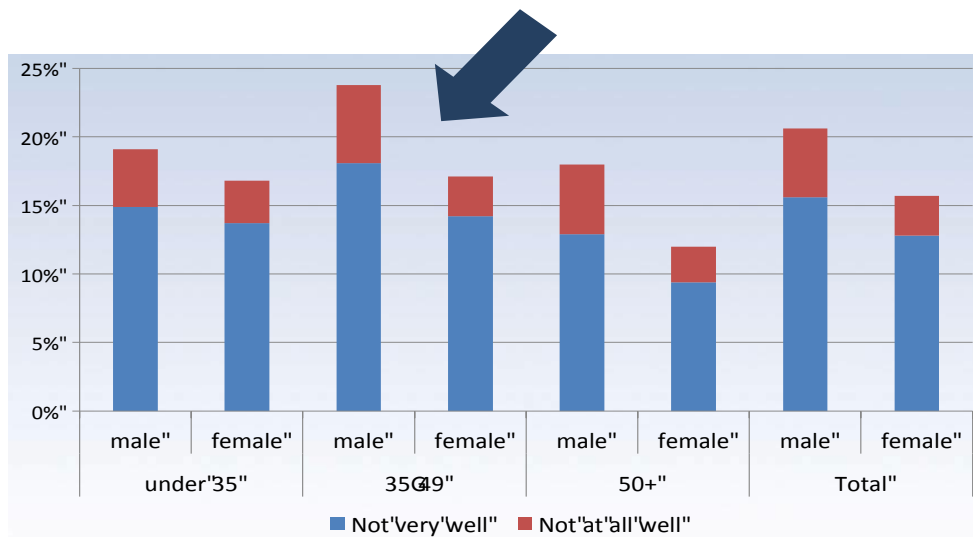
<sup>8</sup> European Commission (2014). Report on equality between women and men

<sup>9</sup> Eurofound (2015). <http://www.mega.public.lu/fr/actualites/2015/07/conseil-informel-epsco/EPSCO-presentation--The-gender-employment-gap-challenges-and-solutions---16-17-July-2015.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Source: Eurostat, LFS (online data code: lfsa\_ewhais); retrieved on 19 Sept. 2011; cited in Scambor et al. (2012, 45)

<sup>11</sup> Fifth European Working Survey, cited in Cabrita, Jorge (2014). Reconciliation of Work and Family Life. Presentation at the "Männerpolitik – Beiträge zur Gleichstellung der Geschlechter" Conference (2nd International Conference on Men and Equal Opportunities) held in Vienna on 6/7 October 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Scambor, Elli & Kirchengast, Anna (2014). Gleichberechtigte Teilhabe. Zur Wahlfreiheit von Männern und Frauen in der Übernahme von Betreuungsarbeiten. Study commissioned by the State of Styria (Austria) and conducted by the Institute for Masculinity Research and Gender Studies ([www.frau.steiermark.at](http://www.frau.steiermark.at)), p. 42



How well do working time and social/family commitments fit? Source: Fifth European Working Condition Survey / Eurofound

Figure 3: Response to the question “How well do working time and social/family commitments fit?”, by gender (Cabrita, 2014)

If we look at the field of **professional care work** – such as care of elderly and sick people, child care, care work in schools and educational sectors, etc. – then the differences between the genders increase again. For example, according to the statistical average, out of 30 Luxembourg children between the ages of four and six, 29 have a female teacher, and 1 has a male teacher<sup>13</sup>. Overall, the proportion of men in all care professions in Europe is between approximately 10 and 20%. And there is no observable general trend towards greater participation by men in this area.

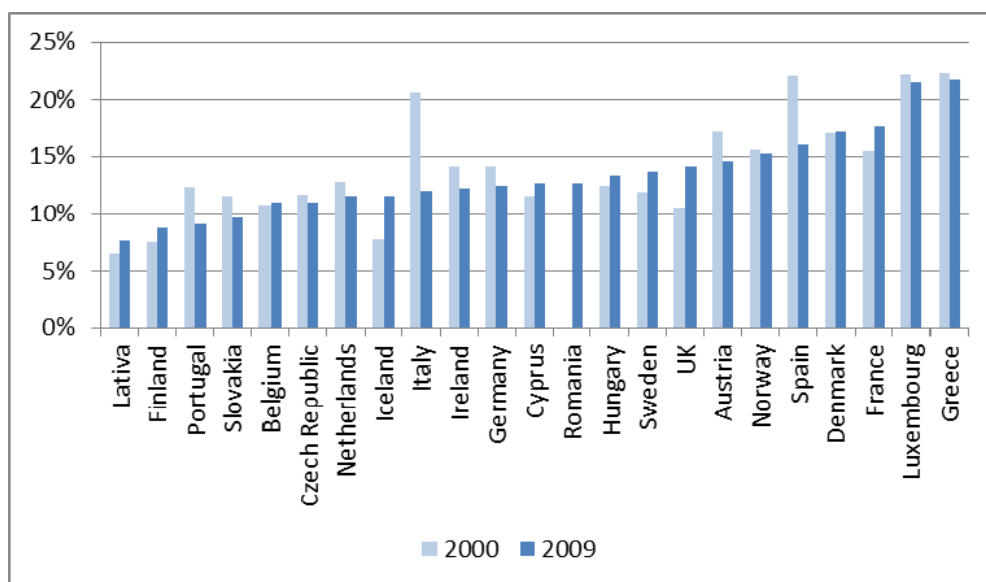


Figure 4: Proportion of men in care professions (in %) <sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> 2012/2013 school year, Cycle 1: 1547 women (96.6%), 55 men (3.4%). Source: <http://www.men.public.lu/catalogue-publications/systeme-educatif/statistiques-analyses/chiffres-cles/2012-2013/fr.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, LFS 2000 Q4. Cited in Scambor et al. (2012, 60).

In view of the structural shift towards a service and knowledge economy, this is one of the reasons why in the future, boys and men are expected to be more frequently affected by unemployment and precarious job prospects than women, as forecast by the EU report on “The State of Men’s Health”<sup>15</sup>.

*Taking Germany as an example: In 1995, more than 12 million people were still employed in the manufacturing sector – predominantly men. In 2008, the number had dropped to just above 10 million (-16.5%). The trend for service occupations is just the opposite. Around 24 million people worked in this sector in 1995 – most of them women. In 2008, the figure had already increased to more than 29 million (+20%)<sup>16</sup>. Against this background, in Germany, Austria and Luxembourg, “boys days” events are intended to pave the way to employment in the growing health, education and care sectors for boys, while “girls days” events aim to make it easier for girls to enter the STEM fields<sup>17</sup>.*

Finally, the area of **self-care** (health) has to be mentioned. In the EU, men die 6.1 years earlier than women (life expectancy: 76.1 v 82.2 years)<sup>18</sup>. This difference is not attributable to biological factors, but rather to lifestyle issues. Among individuals of employable age (15-64 years), 630,000 men and 300,000 women die each year<sup>19</sup>. Three to four times more men than women die in traffic accidents and by suicide, and even twenty times more die as a result of workplace accidents<sup>20</sup>.

## Political Basis

During its EU Presidency in 2015, Luxembourg – like Sweden (2001) and Finland (2006) – put a particular focus on the engagement and involvement of boys, men and fathers in the gender equality process. During the term of Luxembourg’s EU Presidency, the Informal EPSCO Meeting of the EU Ministers for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, held on 17 July 2015, addressed the topic of „Changes in the Labour Market: a challenge for men and women”, in particular examining the question as to which framework conditions could facilitate a new division of professional, private and family responsibilities in order to achieve greater equality between men and women in employment. One key conclusion: “It is necessary that our policies on equality concern not only women but also focus on men – and men must also be involved as actors likely to make claims with regard to equality”<sup>21</sup>. The 2016 conference in Luxembourg will pick up on these findings and can build upon three convictions that are strongly supported by society, economy and politics.

- **True and effective gender equality in all areas of life is essential** (see the Treaty of Lisbon, Art. 3 Provision 3 Subsection 2)<sup>22</sup>. Despite the progress that has been made, the process is still slow-moving. As stated in the Council of Europe’s Gender Equality Strategy

<sup>15</sup> European Union (2011). The State of Men’s Health. See p. 12: “Patterns of work are changing, with men having higher unemployment levels than women, and men being less likely to have a job for life.”

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Icken, Angela (2012). Von der Frauenpolitik zur Politik der Geschlechtergerechtigkeit für Frauen und Männer. In: Theunert, Markus (2012). Männerpolitik. Wiesbaden: Springer VS

<sup>17</sup> STEM: acronym for “Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics”

<sup>18</sup> European Union (2011). The State of Men’s Health. p. 38

<sup>19</sup> European Union (2011). The State of Men’s Health. p. 35

<sup>20</sup> European Union (2011). The State of Men’s Health. p. 66

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.eu2015lu.eu/en/actualites/articles-actualite/2015/07/info-epsco-femmes/index.html>

<sup>22</sup> The EU “shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child.”

2014-2017<sup>23</sup>, “Even if progress is visible (educational attainment, labour market participation, political representation), gender gaps persist in many areas, maintaining men in their traditional roles and constraining women’s opportunities to affirm their fundamental rights and assert their agency”.

- **True and effective gender equality means: equal share in paid and unpaid work.**

“Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate” – Goal 5.4 of the *Sustainable Development Goals* adopted by the UN.

The EU’s “Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men 2010-2015”<sup>24</sup> states that the economic independence of men and women is a prerequisite for gender equality. But: “The impact of parenthood on labour market participation is still very different for women and men in the EU today because women continue to shoulder a disproportionate part of the responsibilities involved in running a family”. The establishment of paternity leave benefits is viewed as one measure to counteract this inequality.

The Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines for the economic and employment policies of the Member States focus on equal opportunities in the labour market and specify the complementary target employment rate of 75% for men and women<sup>25</sup>. At present, the labour force participation rate is 75% for men and 63.5% for women<sup>26</sup>.

- **The inclusion and involvement of boys, men and fathers as agents of change is vital to gender equality policy.**

There is a growing understanding worldwide that the achievement of gender equality requires greater engagement and involvement of husbands and fathers as agents of change, and thus as stakeholders in gender equality policy<sup>27</sup>. Accordingly, in an EPSCO Meeting convened on 30 November and 1 December 2006 in Brussels, the EU Ministers for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities already recognised that “issues related to men and gender equality have not yet been looked at as an entirety, and that the question of men and gender equality should go beyond the reconciliation of professional and private life”<sup>28</sup>. The Council Conclusions on “Men and gender equality” (2006) thus advocated that: “In order to improve the status of women and promote gender equality, more attention should be

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/02\\_GenderEqualityProgramme/Council%20of%20Europe%20Gender%20Equality%20Strategy%202014-2017.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/02_GenderEqualityProgramme/Council%20of%20Europe%20Gender%20Equality%20Strategy%202014-2017.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0491:FIN:en:PDF>, page 4

<sup>25</sup> See Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines for the economic and employment policies of the Member States, Guideline 7: Increasing labour market participation and reducing structural unemployment. <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/Brochure%20Integrated%20Guidelines.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6823708/3-07052015-AP-EN.pdf/7e507ea0-43c7-452f-8e6a-b479c89d2bd6>

<sup>27</sup> See Commission on the Status of Women (2015). Political declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Point 11: “We, the Ministers and representatives of Governments” (...) “recognize the importance of the full engagement of men and boys for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and commit to taking measures to fully engage men and boys in efforts to achieve the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action” [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2015/L.1](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2015/L.1) (Accessed on: 10-12-2015)

<sup>28</sup> Original: “The council (...) (4) recognises, that issues related to men and gender equality have not yet been looked at as an entirety, and that the question of men and gender equality should go beyond the reconciliation of professional and private life.”, see: [http://www.eu2006.fi/NEWS\\_AND\\_DOCUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS/VKO48/EN\\_GB/1164987131570\\_FILES/76348606395122256/DEFAULT/91959.PDF](http://www.eu2006.fi/NEWS_AND_DOCUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS/VKO48/EN_GB/1164987131570_FILES/76348606395122256/DEFAULT/91959.PDF)



paid to how men are involved in the achievement of equality, as well as to the positive impact of gender equality for men and for the well-being of society as a whole<sup>29</sup>. And the EU's "Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men 2010-2015"<sup>30</sup> clearly states that "Gender equality needs the active contribution, support and participation of men and policies should also address gender-related inequalities that affect boys/men such as literacy rates, early school-leaving and occupational health."

Commissioned by the European Commission, Scambor et al. (2012) prepared a report entitled *The Role of Men in Gender Equality*. They conclude the report with three overarching recommendations (p. 151) essential to realising the necessary active involvement of men in the equality process: "Foster 'caring masculinities' as the primary aim in the various topics; develop a balanced and coherent 'men and gender equality' approach embedded in gender equality policy; address men, especially in sub-groups, in the fields where some disadvantages are faced." The Luxembourg Conference aims to provide new impetuses for implementing these recommendations.

## Basic Concepts and Definitions in the Field

The call for policymakers to promote the inclusion and involvement of men in the gender equality process in general and specifically of men in care settings and care professions has already been formulated and is widely supported. However, actual implementation still lags behind. This is also due in part to the heterogeneous basic foundations of the concept.

To date, the concept of "caring masculinities" is still not precisely defined, and the term is used in various ways. The search for a common definition is even further compounded by the fact that men in traditional lifestyles do take care of the family as well – even if they rather "provide *for* the family" in the classic breadwinner model than "provide care *in* the family". Conversely, care work *in* the family is clearly referenced: the care work is the mother's job. Gardener Schwerma and Beier (2007) thus mention an important point when they write<sup>31</sup>: "We must not restrict the term 'care' to 'what a mother does', and by this take a very gendered perspective on it. We received examples of typical male patterns of care connected to labour and the breadwinner model – care at work, communication facing colleagues, humour, respect and support, etc. That does not mean there would be nothing left to change. Tasks and resources are still distributed unequally. But the perspective is, that there are already caring masculinities in various forms – they have to be fostered, and maybe modified. But it is not necessary to invent them from the scratch."

The conference aims to contribute to the further development by highlighting the various levels and issues that the concept of "caring masculinities" addresses:

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<sup>29</sup> [http://www.eu2006.fi/NEWS\\_AND\\_DOCUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS/VKO48/EN\\_GB/1164987131570/\\_FILES/76348606395122256/DEFAULT/91959.PDF](http://www.eu2006.fi/NEWS_AND_DOCUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS/VKO48/EN_GB/1164987131570/_FILES/76348606395122256/DEFAULT/91959.PDF)

<sup>30</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0491:FIN:en:PDF>, page 10

<sup>31</sup> Gärtner, Marc; Schwerma, Klaus; Beier, Stefan (2007). *Fostering Caring Masculinities*. Documentation of the German Gender Expert Study. Berlin: Dissens e.V. and genderWerk, <http://www.dissens.de/de/dokumente/focus-expert-study-germany.pdf>

(1) The concept of “caring masculinities” describes certain types of **care (giving) activities and tasks**. How strict the definition should be is a matter of dispute. Feminist care theory generally includes all unpaid household work and all paid and unpaid care and support work in the definition<sup>32</sup>. This narrow perspective is more expedient from the standpoint of a feminist care economy than that of a men’s policy aligned to gender equality. The latter adopts a broader concept of care that covers all types of care – especially self-care, but also other “typically male” care activities, such as, for example, a voluntary commitment as the coach of a junior football team. This approach aims at being a better fit with the reality of men’s involvement in care settings, and in particular strives to prevent the misconception that the topic of “caring masculinities” can be reduced to “caring paternities” – the engagement and involvement of fathers. Figure 5 shows the tasks and activities that can be included in the field of caring masculinities when using a broad concept of care.



Figure 5: Broad definition of the concept of care (author’s own illustration)

<sup>32</sup> Madörin, Mascha (2007). Neoliberalismus und die Reorganisation der Care-Ökonomie. In: Denknetz. Jahrbuch 2007, pp. 141-162, p. 142

The Luxembourg conference takes such a broad concept of caring masculinities as its basis. Highlighting the wide range of the actual and desirable care tasks and activities undertaken by men is one of the goals of the conference.

(2) The concept of “caring masculinities” refers to **certain qualities of care tasks and activities** as well as to forms of the **relationship and interaction quality** between the caregiver and the cared for. In the case of childcare, for example, a focus of interest is on qualities of (child)care that traditionally tend to be associated with men, such as games or playful wrestling, versus qualities more traditionally associated with women, such as feeding/breastfeeding, reading or cuddling, which – regardless of the time involved in the care – are distinctly gender-specific. The importance of mothers with respect to encouraging and discouraging paternal involvement in care tasks and activities is also well documented. Bartelsen and Niederöst (2015) summarize the current state of research<sup>33</sup>: “If the gender role orientation of the mother is a strongly traditional one, it is difficult or in some cases even virtually impossible for the father to participate in childcare, even if this does not reflect his attitude (‘maternal gatekeeping’).” But fundamental questions also arise, such as how to keep care relationships free of power imbalances in view of the relationship of dependence between the caregiver and the cared for. This question is emphasised in the field of caring masculinities, if it is assumed that the pursuit of power and dominance are constitutive elements of hegemonic masculinities (Elliott 2015).

(3) At the strategic level, the concept of caring masculinities describes a specific **gender equality policy approach** which views the promotion, support and advocacy of men’s engagement and involvement in care settings as a lever (see Figure 5) to transform a system that reproduces or even dictates (gender) inequalities. The global MenCare Campaign emerged in this tradition<sup>34</sup>.

The focus on caring masculinities is therefore regarded as helpful because:

- it addresses men as agents and stakeholders in the gender equality process and their own desires for change;
- it identifies less-explored potential;
- while it puts unpaid work at the forefront, it makes it conceptually inseparable from the area of paid employment – and thus from the issue of fair and equitable distribution of work.

In this context, Gärtner et al. (2007) write: “The question of work and care challenges traditional gender roles which opens space for rethinking the concepts of men, women, femininity and masculinity. Moreover it changes the perception of caring as a gender-related burden and an undervalued activity in society.” (FOCUS Reports, Introduction<sup>35</sup>).

(4) With respect to the actual impact – irrespective of the amount of time men spend on care activities – certain ideas about **desirable changes** are connected to the concept of caring masculinities. The effects of the father’s presence during the very early years of childhood have been thoroughly studied. Research in this area<sup>36</sup> shows that paternal involvement in childcare has a positive effect on the cognitive, emotional and social development of infants and children, strengthens family relationships, raises the earning potential of mothers, and

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<sup>33</sup> Bartelsen, Annabelle & Niederöst, Sibylle (2015). Übersicht Forschungsstand zur Beteiligung von Männern und Vätern an Betreuungsaufgaben von Kindern im Rahmen des nationalen Programms MenCare Schweiz. Unpublished study commissioned by the Swiss Institute for Men and Gender Issues (SIMG)

<sup>34</sup> [www.men-care.org](http://www.men-care.org)

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.dissens.de/de/dokumente/focus-expert-study-germany.pdf>, page 3

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., <http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2014/fi-research-summary-co-parenting-and-early-childhood-development/>

keeps fathers healthy. Kimmel (2010) compiles evidence showing that men's involvement in care work is connected to: "improved physical and psychological health, decreased use of alcohol and recreational drugs, longer life span, and more intimate, nurturing relationships with their children. (...) Caring masculinities can therefore enrich men's lives in myriad ways, emotionally, psychologically, and physically."<sup>37</sup> Hanlon (2012) asked male caregivers if they felt "enriched" by the experience: "The men reported that doing caring made [them] feel 'responsible', 'competent', 'proud', 'challenged', 'joy', 'fantastic', 'happy', 'brilliant', and wanted, especially – although not exclusively – in respect of the care of children"<sup>38</sup>.

(5) On a normative level, the concept of caring masculinities describes a **normative model**. Elliott (2015) writes: "The rejection of domination and the integration of values derived from the realm of care such as positive emotion, interdependence, and relationality are, I suggest, at the core of caring masculinities." (13). From this perspective, caring masculinities become a "counter model" to hegemonic concepts of masculinity that are based on the principle of (self-)exploitation. If hegemonic and caring masculinities are not viewed as opposites, a more integrative concept can be formulated: The idea of caring masculinities refers to a capability to be involved and responsible, to a responsive attitude<sup>39</sup>. This also refers to the degree of obligation and commitment: "In contrast to women, who feel sort of an inherent moral obligation to care (for family members and relatives), men tend to view this as a 'voluntary commitment' that is not necessarily an integral part of their self-image."<sup>40</sup>.

On an individual level, the concept of caring masculinities points to the direction in which traditional-hegemonic models of masculinity can be expanded und modernised to form a contemporary (self-)image of men<sup>41</sup>. Coltrane (1996) interviewed American couples who share paid work and unpaid parenting/household work. "Both fathers and mothers reported that the practice of child care, in itself, transformed the men. (...) My findings suggest that when domestic activities are shared equally, 'maternal thinking' develops in fathers as well as mothers, and the social meaning of gender begins to change."<sup>42</sup> Hanlon (2012) emphasises: "Doing caring work is associated with having a more flexible definition of masculinity, men's roles, and men's caring capabilities"<sup>43</sup>.

The corresponding concept for couples and families is the dual earner/dual carer model. In this context, the concept of caring masculinities extends beyond the fair, quantitative distribution of tasks and activities, because care does not just mean being involved, but also being concerned. Consequently, equality then does not only refer to equally sharing care activities and tasks, but also equally sharing care responsibilities. Taking a holistic approach,

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<sup>37</sup> Kimmel, Michael S. (2010). *Misframing Men: The Politics of Contemporary Masculinities*. New Brunswick, Canada: Rutgers University Press.

<sup>38</sup> Hanlon, Niall (2012). *Masculinities, Care and Equality: Identity and Nurture in Men's Lives*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 137

<sup>39</sup> See Rosa, Hartmut (2012). *Weltbeziehungen im Zeitalter der Beschleunigung*.

<sup>40</sup> Zulehner, Paul M. & Steinmair-Pösel, Petra (2014). *Gleichstellung in der Sackgasse? Frauen, Männer und die überforderte Familie von heute*. Vienna-Graz: Styria, 118

<sup>41</sup> Elliott, Karla (2015). *Caring Masculinities: Theorizing an Emerging Concept*. *Men and Masculinities*, 1-20, p. 13. Also see: Hanlon (2012, 66): "We cannot appreciate masculinities without understanding relations of power and dominance, but we cannot understand power and dominance without also appreciating men's emotional lives. Moreover, we cannot deconstruct male power without reconstructing the emotional lives of men."

<sup>42</sup> Coltrane, Scott (1996). *Family Man: Fatherhood, Housework and Gender Equity*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 83

<sup>43</sup> Hanlon, Niall (2012). *Masculinities, Care and Equality: Identity and Nurture in Men's Lives*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 202

Lynch, Baker and Lyons (2009) call for an affective equality that also includes equal opportunities with respect to love, care, and solidarity<sup>44</sup>.

## The Concept of the Conference

Everyday experience and research confirm: To realise the EU gender equality objectives and open up equal access to the labour market for all, there needs to be a higher proportion of women in paid employment as well greater involvement of men in the care sector. Figure 6 illustrates the relationship.

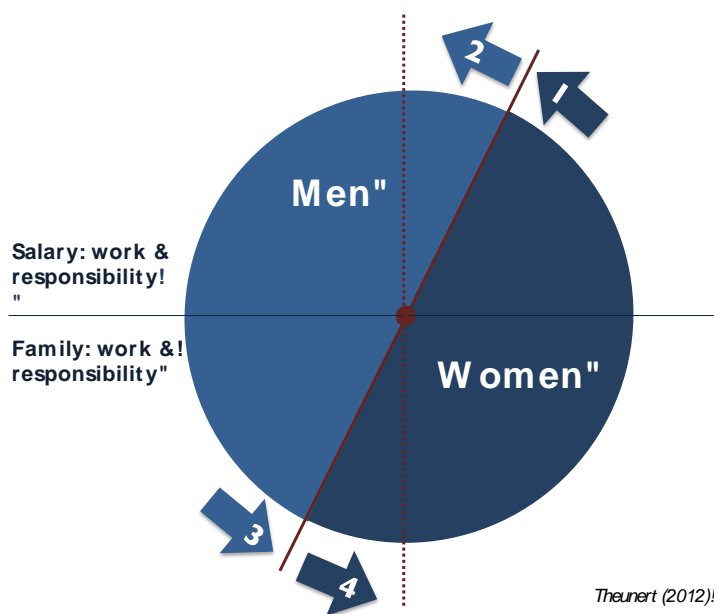


Figure 6: Four leverages affect the redistribution of paid work (upper half) and unpaid work (lower half) between men (light) and women (dark) from the current status (solid line) going towards equality (dashed line). Leverages 2 and 3 address boys, husbands and fathers as agents and stakeholders in gender equality policy.

From this perspective, the term “caring masculinities” in the simplest interpretation can be used as a synonym for the care tasks and activities undertaken by men (“care contributions”). The Luxembourg conference also takes this pragmatic approach as a basis for determining which individual, cultural, social, economic and political conditions are conducive to boys, men and fathers assuming their half of the responsibility for care work. The conference takes into consideration all of the causal relationships and interdependencies that affect the capabilities, tasks and activities shown in Figure 5. It is assumed that

- a) gender equality is the established goal;
- b) gender equality refers to the equal distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men;
- c) the promotion of men’s involvement in and contributions to care work is thus an essential element of gender equality policy strategies.

<sup>44</sup> Lynch, Kathleen; John Baker; Maureen Lyons (Eds.) (2009). *Affective Equality: Love, Care and Injustice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Men's engagement in care is considered to be the product of a complex interplay of political structures (e.g. the extent and organisation of paternity leave, availability of extrafamilial childcare, etc.), organisational framework conditions (corporate work time culture and work organisation models, availability requirements, recognition of part-time work and job sharing, etc.), cultural norms and values (e.g. the conception that young children need their mothers to be present), and individual inclinations and desires. In this complex interplay, a policy of "individual freedom of choice" falls short if it does not first and foremost create the conditions (for example, equal pay) that make freedom of choice actually possible<sup>45</sup>.

The conference

- presents the current realities with regard to care settings and highlights the diversity of men's contributions to care;
- explores the causes and potential for change in the complex interplay between the individual and family, politics, society and economy;
- calls for conducive framework conditions and political influence both within and beyond gender equality policies;
- formulates recommendations for targeted, evidence-based work-life balance policies;
- supports boys, men and fathers as agents of gender equality policy change;
- networks politics, administration, business and civil society, and promotes dialogue between stakeholders involved in women's and men's policy issues;
- sends a signal to encourage and advocate boys, men and fathers to assume their equal share of responsibility in care settings.

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<sup>45</sup> See Scambor, Elli & Kirchengast, Anna (2014). Gleichberechtigte Teilhabe. Zur Wahlfreiheit von Männern und Frauen in der Übernahme von Betreuungsarbeiten. Study commissioned by the State of Styria (Austria) and conducted by the Institute for Masculinity Research and Gender Studies ([www.frau.steiermark.at](http://www.frau.steiermark.at))