

Men in care

WORKPLACE SUPPORT FOR CARING MASCULINITIES

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the final newsletter of the EU-financed EaSI project Men in Care: Workplace support for Caring Masculinities. We are very happy to present the results and experiences in the promotion of a gender-equal Work-Life Balance. Bringing men into care is our shared interest. Care is a primary human activity, the most important to maintain life and to make it worthwhile. Paradoxically care is undervalued, despite its growing importance due to demographic ageing, pandemics, and climate change. Most care for children and the elderly is an unpaid activity performed by women. Yet, men are stepping in because they want to, need to and are

being encouraged to care. Our objective today is to present results as well as instruments and processes through which we can facilitate men to take care of their loved ones. The Men in Care project involved eight countries including Iceland, Norway, Germany, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, North Macedonia and Spain. This helped us to understand the challenges of promoting caring masculinities at workplaces all over Europe. Our country reports show the large gender gaps in paid and care work, but also the growth of caring tasks shouldered by men, and how public and company policies can create incentives for caring masculinities. The Men in Care training for companies and trade unions, the Guide for Employers and the political recommendations for the EU show ways to transform policies and organisational cultures for men who become caregivers. Our project provides insights and instruments, which hopefully will be integrated into many companies and trade union policies all over Europe and will encourage the EU institutions to strengthen the role of men in gender equality policies.

2. Final Conference: Caring Masculinities @Work: Companies' Support for Men's Work-Life Balance

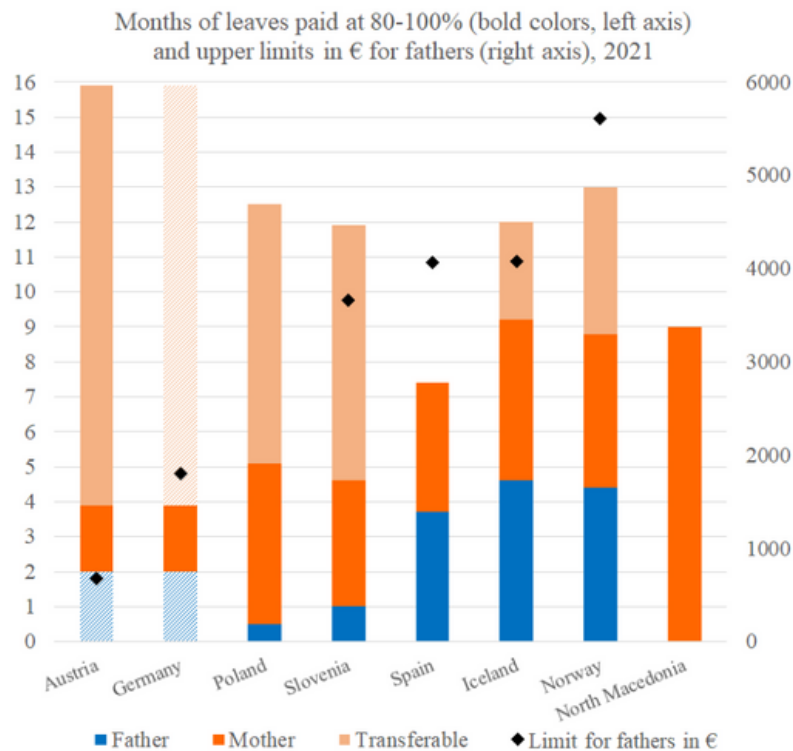


The Men in Care (MiC) conference took place on 19 May 2022, in Berlin. The MiC project has involved more than three years of work in eight European countries carrying out research and training within organisations and companies to encourage working men to become actively involved in care, especially unpaid care of their loved ones. The conference presented research results and good practice examples from the countries involved in the project. Additionally, table talks gave all participants the opportunity to present their views on the findings presented.

The event, which was attended by over 60 participants, gave room for discussion and exchange on how to follow up on enhancing gender equality and work-life balance policies both at the institutional and organisational levels.

The conference materials, including presentations and table talk sessions, are publically available on the [MiC website](#). At the first round of table talks, participants reflected on the results of MiC and how to promote caring masculinities. Advances are perceived as slow, but we can learn from some good practices from Iceland, Norway, and Spain: they have well-paid, individual and non-transferable fathers' leaves (see figure below) and high take-up rates (70-90% of fathers), and the legal requirement to implement equality plans in companies (latter two countries, see example of [Catalan police here](#)). Yet, there are still many cultural barriers at the companies (lack of role models, of information, men in top positions or blue collar occupations are more difficult to reach) and within families (mother's gatekeeping and father's passivity). So, implementation of laws in companies should

be monitored by governments and trade unions, amongst others. More men need to become role models.



Source: Parental Leave Network Review 2021 and national partners. Note: In Poland there are no upper limits for maternity, paternity or parental leave benefits.

Some interesting ideas for future work came up. Companies with better work-life balance for men can attract young men, in particular a six-hour working day, as presented by [Matej Feguš of Donar](#) in Slovenia. Participants also discussed the need for both top-down (e.g leave law in Spain) and bottom-up approach in increasing men's share of care work (e.g trainers showing the advantages of caring masculinities for men's health, happiness and for reduction of male violence). It is important to spread the ideas of MiC by training other trainers, such as teachers, trainers at companies, human resources and gender experts etc. Additionally in order to overcome resistance to caring

masculinities, we need solidarity and coalitions across stakeholders, and should focus on the right of children to equal contact with both parents. A stronger life-cycle approach can help share the message with a wider audience, and the themes of health and care should be better connected and further disseminated.

3. Men in Care promotional videos

In order to further disseminate the aims of improving workplace conditions to promote men taking caring roles, the MiC team has produced videos in Spanish and Slovenian (both with English subtitles). The videos present the viewpoint of employers who participated in the MiC organisational analysis, as well as those that are encouraging men in their companies to take up a greater share of care work, through various incentives.

[Watch the videos here](#)

4. Men in Care Guide for Employers

The MiC Guide for Employers has been made for employers, human resources departments, gender experts and workers' representatives who are interested in discovering and satisfying the work-life balance needs of men in their companies, in order to achieve a more motivated, happier and productive workforce. The guide explores the barriers men face in the workplace in order to take up caregiving tasks and the consequences they have. It also contains

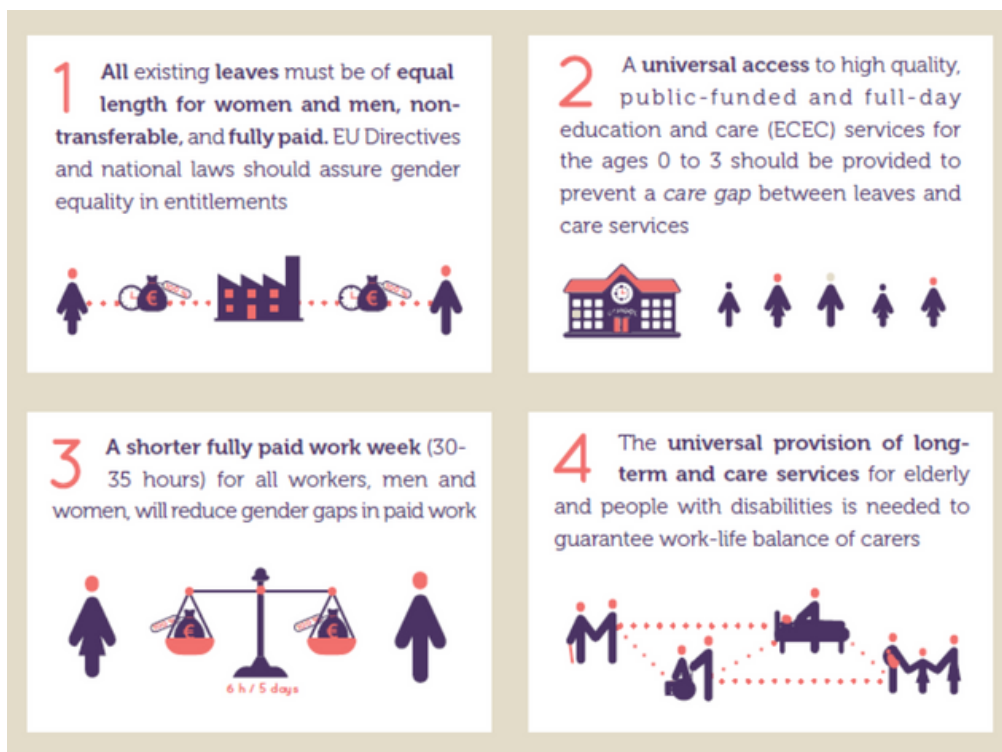
advice on how to recruit, accommodate and retain workers who prioritise a well-balanced relationship between work and family or other care responsibilities to achieve a more motivated, happier, and productive workforce. The guide is available in [English](#), [Basque](#), [German](#), [Spanish](#), [Slovenian](#), [Norwegian](#) and [Polish](#).



Recommendations from the Guide for Employers are also condensed in a poster version to make them more accessible to employers who want to learn how to facilitate a better work-life balance for their employees. The poster is available in [English](#), [German](#), [Polish](#), [Spanish](#), [Slovenian](#) and [Norwegian](#) languages.

5. Political Recommendations: Bringing Men Into Care

Based on the Men in Care study, the MiC team has prepared a set of political recommendations for the European Commission and the European Parliament to create an ecosystem that brings men into care. The recommendations include, amongst others:



6. Manual for Employers: Take Care of Working Carers with Special Considerations for Men Carers

Supporting carers to combine work and care is critical for improving the quality of life of carers and, besides the state's and the local community's provision of care services, employers are central to this. The MiC manual is designed for employers who want to understand the societal and business case for supporting employees with caring responsibilities. The manual is available in [English](#), [German](#), [Icelandic](#), [Polish](#) and [Slovenian](#).

7. National dissemination and networking events

MiC partners have organized and participated in final coming-together, dissemination and networking events on work-life-balance topics to present the results of MiC.

We offer a summary of the most important MiC events that took place in 2022 in Austria, North Macedonia, Poland, Slovenia and Spain.

Austria

The Men in Care national event “What conditions does well-distributed family work require and what can companies and politics do about it?” took place on the 8th of June and what can companies and politics do about it? took place on the 8th of June in Austria. The event was organised by [VMG](#) in close cooperation with the Umbrella Organisation for Men’s Work in Austria (DMÖ), the women’s organisation ABZ* AUSTRIA and the Federation of Austrian Industries and targeted 43 participants from industry, politics, administration, research and men's work. The event focused on the themes of “What role do men play in care work and how does the situation in Austria compare with other European countries?”, “What adjustments need to be made in companies in order to achieve equality and diversity?”, “And what demands should be made to policymakers?”. Benedikt Treschnitzer (Representatives from the Social Ministry) and Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi (Federation of Austrian Industries) contributed with welcome speeches. Elli Scambor from the Austrian MiC partner VMG presented the MiC key findings, panellists were Erich Lehner (DMÖ), Manuela Vollmann (ABZ* AUSTRIA), Traude Kogoj (Diversitymanagement, ÖBB) and Nikolaus Griller (Trade Union Representative, Gebauer & Griller Kabelwerke GmbH).



North Macedonia

On November 4, 2021, a national event with 47 participants on the topic "Men and Care: Caring masculinity in Northern Macedonia", organised by Reactor - Action Research, took place online via Zoom. The panel hosted several representatives that discussed the Men in Care project and its results, the new labour law and efforts towards introduction of shared parental leave policies in North Macedonia, and gender sensitive education and challenging gender stereotypes. The Men in Care [country report on North Macedonia](#) was also presented at the event. During the panel, the importance of involving men in care and gender equality, European practices and results on this topic, efforts to introduce policies to promote men's involvement in care and shared parental leave, as well as the importance of gender-sensitive education and breaking down gender stereotypes, were discussed. The panelists stressed the need to recognize the value of unpaid care and the need to find appropriate formal solutions to the informal care economy.

Norway

On 16th August 2022, Reform – resource centre for men organised the event "Do we really want men as parents?" during the Arendal week, the largest political gathering in Norway. Ole Nordfjell (Chief adviser, Reform) presented the "Men in Care Guide for for Employers" and "Men in Care Political Recommendations" at the event. The results from the MiC project and the ongoing political debate in Norway about the parental leave scheme was the backdrop for a panel discussion. Surveys show a high support from all genders for the current paid parental leave scheme, 15 weeks for each parent and 16 weeks for sharing. Albeit, there are vocal actors campaigning for "taking" parental weeks from the fathers and "give" to the mothers. Tore Eugen Kvalheim, director, at the Employers' Association Spekter strongly advocated against a reduction in paid fathers leave. The other participants in the panel were Turid Kristensen (Parliamentary representative, The Conservative Party), Bjørn Erik Thon (Director, The Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud), Ingeborg Berg-Olstad (Specialist advisor, National Group of Health Nurses NSF). The meeting was chaired by Are Saastad (General Manager of Reform).



Are Saastad (Manager, Reform), Bjørn Erik Thon (Director, The Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud), Turid Kristensen (Parliamentary representative, The Conservative Party), Ingeborg Berg-Olstad (Specialist advisor, National Group of Health Nurses NSF), and Tore Eugen Kvalheim, Director, The Employers' Association Spekter)

The need for a more father-inclusive health service and an infant care was also addressed at the event. A preliminary version of Reform's film FROM DADDY TO DADDY was shown. In the film fathers of newborn babies are interviewed about their new caring role.

Coming together-cinema event

On the 30th of August the project Men in Care and Reform – resource centre for men invited fathers and employers to a cinema event in the centre of Oslo (Kunstnerenes Hus Kino). The cinema event started with a panel conversation titled: “Is the job a resource or a burden for men breaking up with their partner”. This question was explored by Ole Nordfjell (Chief adviser, Reform, with results from the MiC-studies), Marianne Inèz Lien (sociologist and researcher in men and masculinities), and Ingun Oystese (Deacon adviser, Church of Norway). To the table Ingun brought many years of experience leading conversation groups for people who have experienced a break-up. The documentary “The bothersome father” was the film selected and shown for the event, and was followed by an insightful conversation between the director Paulo Chavarria and Are Saastad (General Manager of Reform).



Left: Ingun Oystese (Deacon adviser, Church of Norway), Marianne Inèz Lien (sociologist and researcher in men and masculinities), and Ole Nordfjell (Chief adviser, Reform)
Right: Paulo Chavarria (Film director) and Are Saastad (General Manager of Reform)

Poland

On the 30th June 2022, the Jagiellonian University in Kraków in collaboration with the PLinEU Association carried out a workshop for the university's employees, titled "How to effectively combine parental roles with work at the university".

The workshop was led by professional trainer Sylwia Tałach-Kubas, who has a broad experience in improving organisational cultures with work-life balance policies and solutions. The meeting was an opportunity to reflect on the roles performed by workshop participants and to share individual ways of combining care with work at the university. Participants discussed barriers to work-care reconciliation and considered ways to achieve greater balance.

The workshop was also an occasion to learn about the assumptions of the "Men in Care" project and the various dimensions of male caring. Workshop participants also had a chance to look at the challenges resulting from reconciling parental roles with professional work, find out how fathers in Poland and other EU countries cope with these challenges, and talk about how fatherhood contributes to the change of contemporary masculinities models. They were also able to discuss the benefits of work-life balance, and learn about good practices.

The Working Parents Club by State Street Bank was the perfect opportunity to present and discuss the results of "Men in Care" project with over 200 people, including parents and children. On 5th June 2022, The Working Parents Club was organised by State Street Bank in Krakow,

Poland. The event presented the perfect opportunity to discuss the results of the Men in Care project. The founders of the Working Parents network were presented the MiC poster with the guidelines for employers by the project representatives from Jagiellonian University and Diversity Hub. The event also included a speech by a father involved in the care of his seven children, (father of 7 children!) and a workshop for parents with child psychologists on sharing the caring roles. In addition to the formal content, there were also fun activities for children and families as a whole - the event atmosphere resembled that of a large family picnic. The State Street Bank Working Parents Club has participated in the Men in Care project from the beginning and has contributed to the project findings by taking part in the research and sharing the good practices for working parents. The corporate parents' network often cooperates with Diversity Hub and other NGOs focused on parenthood and care work.



Slovenia

MiC partners in Slovenia, the Peace Institute, the Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia, and the Association of Employers of Slovenia organised the event, "Shorter working week - opportunities and pitfalls", on the 8 of June in Ljubljana. The event was attended by 60 representatives of ministries, companies, trade unions and other organizations. Good practices of companies in the field of work-life balance, which cooperated in MiC organizational analysis were discussed. A key discussion point was a shorter working week without the reduction in salary - a topic that has been much discussed in Slovenia recently and its impact on gender equality and gender-equal division of household and care work at home. This was followed by a presentation by Dr. Jana Javornik on short-time working time and the pilot testing in some companies in the UK.

The event concluded with a panel discussion with key stakeholders, social partners, companies, and academia on attitudes, practices, and efforts towards a shorter working week. Panelists included Mr. Miro Smrekar (The Association of Employers of Slovenia, Abaris d.o.o.), Mr. Matija Drmota (The Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia), Dr. Eva Boštjančič (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts), Ms. Katarina Hohnjec (Hoby les d.o.o.) and Mr. Matej Feguš (Donar d.o.o.).

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Spain

The second multiplier event in Spain took place on 22nd February 2022 at the Spanish Distance University (UNED). The event focused on the analysis of the use of "Birth and care" leave by men (former paternity leave) after the last legal reform. The meeting consisted of two parts. During the first part, academic research on the subject was presented by professors Gerardo Meil (UAM), José Andrés Fernández Cornejo (UCM), Irina Fernández (professor of Sociology II of the UNED) and Cristina Castellanos (professor of the Department of Applied Economics of the UNED) showing a high use of the leave by fathers, but 75% took their fathers' weeks together with the mother. It is difficult for men to divide their leave into the first six compulsory weeks after birth and taking the additional 10 voluntary weeks after mothers go back to the job. The second part of the event involved stakeholders from the public administration, a trade union and the affiliated feminist Platform for Equal and Non-

transferable Parental Leave (PPiINA) shared their experience on the implementation of the new leave system. The equality agent of CC.OO Castilla y León María Sánchez Holgado spoke about the most common queries made by working parents about the leave, the lawyer of the National Institute of Social Security Andrés Trillo focused on the pending aspects of transposition of the "European Directive on Conciliation" of 2019 and, finally, María Pazos, on behalf of PPiINA, main promoter of the reform, exposed the devil in the details of the legal reform: six weeks must be taken after birth both parents together and parents have lost their right to decide how to uptake the voluntary part. [All presentations are available online in Spanish here.](#)



The team from the Spanish Distance University (UNED), the Confederation Secretariat of Women, Equality and Working Conditions of the trade union Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) and the Fundación 1º de Mayo organized the closing event of the MiC Project in Spain, on 23rd March 2022- Men and Care: Corresponsable Work-Life-Balance from organizations.

The event was held at the Economic and Social Council of Spain, in Madrid, and had interventions by Antón Costas, President of the Economic and Social Council of Spain; Unai Sordo, General Secretary of CCOO; Ricardo Mairal Usón, Rector of UNED; and Ángela Rodríguez Martínez, Secretary of State for Equality and Against Gender Violence. Over 50 gender experts, trade union representatives and other stakeholders took part at the final event. This was followed by the presentation of results of the MiC project and on the application of good practices in different territories and sectors from the trade union perspective. Teresa Jurado Guerrero, the European coordinator, and Paco Abril, the Spanish trainer for MiC presented the Spanish versions of the guide for companies and the policy recommendations of the MiC project for the EU. Summary of results of MiC in Spanish are available [here](#) (UNED) and [here](#) (CCOO).



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