

Men in care

WORKPLACE SUPPORT FOR CARING MASCULINITIES

CONTENTS

1. What is Men in Care?
2. Covid-19, care and work-life balance in participant countries
3. Our national reports are here
4. Men in Care progress
5. Our interview
6. In Depth: Men need to be with families too: progress towards caring masculinities in MiC countries

What is *Men in Care*?

The European MiC project aims to improve organisational conditions for men taking on caring roles. Its main focus is organisational players, structures and cultures that could enable men to do what they want - be more involved in caring roles - but often fail to do so. A network of companies, social partners, researchers and organisations will be created to improve work-life balance for men and women.

Work-Life-Balance and Caring Masculinities

MiC will identify and share best practice models for achieving a high level of work and life balance to enable both men and women to take on caring roles - for their family members, for themselves and for people in their near social environment such as friends and colleagues.



Covid-19, care and work-life balance in participant countries

Austria

A representative study, conducted in April 2020 with more than 500 parents of children under 15 years showed that Austrian families (especially women) are heavily burdened by the corona crisis (SORA on behalf of the Momentum Institute, 2020). Differences in the use of home office by educational level are not surprising: 67% of academics vs. only 11% of those with lowest level of education. The corona crisis has not led to an equal distribution of care work, but it has contributed to narrowing the gender gap: before the lockdown, 31% of women and 2% of men in dual-earner households were the main responsible person for unpaid care-work, while during lockdown those rates increased especially for men (42% of women vs 23% of men).

Germany

The pandemic exacerbated gender inequalities and exposed the precariousness of women. The vast majority of healthcare workers and personal care workers in health services in the EU are women, at 76 % and 86 %, respectively (EIGE stats). In Germany, the Federal Cabinet announced EUR 1 billion in investment in ECEC services for 2020 and 2021, and further funds, amounting to EUR 1.5 billion, have been earmarked for the expansion of all-day care in schools for grades 1 to 4 (BMFSFJ, 2020). In Germany as across the EU, women's organisations are lobbying for greater acknowledgement and appreciation of unpaid work by women, for gender-sensitive recovery efforts and further investment in the care economy, development of care services, greater data collection on unpaid care and its inclusion in GDP calculations, and the inclusion of gender impact assessments and gender budgeting principles in all funds spent in the framework of the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility (EWL, 2020)

Iceland

Iceland took a "softer" approach to COVID-19 than many other European countries. Neither preschools nor primary schools were closed so the effects on family life were not as serious as in many other countries. A recent survey showed that 35% of women and 22% of men experienced increased work pressure during the pandemic but also that fathers had increased their participation in childcare and domestic work. A governmental bill has been introduced in the Icelandic parliament, extending parental leave from 10 to 12 months, and dividing it between parents so that each is entitled to 6 months, but one month is transferable.

Norway

In Norway schools and kindergartens were closed for 6 weeks, on March 12, 2020. Parents who had to care for their children got extended rights to receive full pay for care for children. A Norwegian [study](#) showed that care obligations for both men and women increased, but women in general reported a slightly higher number of hours spent caring for children than men. Every year, the trade union YS conducts a survey among 3,000 employees nationally, which provides a picture of the employees' situation. Gender equality and work-family balance are included in the questions. In 2020, the survey was conducted in March and April, from the time of the first descent (Ingelsrud, Ellingsen and Steen, 2020). 41 percent reported that as a consequence of the corona outbreak, they had been required to work from home.

(the couple decide how to split the leave). Among other solutions allowing men to better reconcile work and care are unpaid extended childcare leave (up to 36 months) and a right to use a part of maternity leave. They can also ask for reduced working hours and until the child is four years old and they may not perform overtime or cannot be sent to work outside of their workplace without their consent.

Poland

In Poland, the COVID pandemic brought significant changes in the organisation of work and balancing it with private lives. The lockdown resulted in closure of schools and care institutions on 16th of March – since then the schools were functioning online a short period of openness in September/October 2020. Preschools and nurseries continue to function since May 2020. Parents of children until age of 8 are entitled to paid care leave, if care facility is closed. According to the MIC study in Polish corporations, parents' overburden with providing care for children or/and supporting them in education has been reported to have impact on employees' possibilities to perform work duties. This situation has resulted in changing patterns of work-life balance, having also some positive impacts, and encouraging companies to introduce solutions to support employees, in particular flexible work schedule.

Slovenia

In Slovenia kindergartens and schools closed for 2 months across the country during the first lockdown on March 16, 2020. Parents who stayed at home due to childcare were entitled to 50% compensation from their salary or in case of minimum wage up to at least 70% of it. Where both (or single) parents were employed in critical occupations, including service members, the state offered organized childcare at home for children up to 5th grade of elementary school. According to Aragon, which conducted a [survey](#) in late March and early April, just under a third of respondents went to work as usual, just under a third of respondents worked from home, and 16 percent were at home waiting for work. The study also revealed that men were more likely to go to work as usual compared to women, while women were more likely than men to stay at home for childcare.

Spain

Spain was under the first alarm state since March 14th to June 21st, 2020 due to the pandemics. During this period, schools were closed and many men and women worked from home. This has been an [ambivalent experience](#) for many families. [Results from a survey](#), run between May 5th and May 19th during easing of the lockdown conditions in Spain, reveal that fathers slightly increased their share of childcare, even though mothers did most. Many companies have now established new policies on telework and in October remote work was regulated by the [28/2020 Act](#). Written agreements must be signed between companies and employees who work remotely more than 30% of working time. In 2020, also, men who had a child enjoyed 12 weeks of paternity leave, which will be extended to 16 (same as maternity leave) in 2021 ([Act 06/2019](#)).

Our national reports are here

We are very happy to share the release of our national benchmarking reports, which include context analyses of the seven participant countries as well as organisational analyses for five of them.

Organisational analyses focus on best practices that can foster caring masculinities. Our qualitative researchers have done around 150 interviews within 18 organisations/companies in five countries.

Many different topics have emerged such as the flexibility stigma, organisational culture, partners' negotiation, co-workers' support, etc. Below we focus on four of these topics, as vparental leave, the stand-by attitude at home, the obstacles of managerial jobs for fathering and the importance of supervisors' support.

The link between time offered by parental leave and quality of relations through involved fathering

“With the older kid it was totally important, because when the younger one also came he oriented himself more towards me anyway, as his mom had less time for him. But that was great, because I was on parental leave for a while and he already knew that I could do the same. And with the younger one it was also good, so the relationship with the children has completely ... not improved, it was simply a completely different quality. (...) We did routine things together, like the children went to bed with me. That falling asleep is also possible with dad, even for a very small child. That they sometimes came to me at night and not to their mom. And that they let mommy sleep and woke me up when they needed something. Fun-nily enough, I never woke up when they were yelling mommy. Only when they called daddy.”
(Carer 5, ResearchSchool, AT)

Contrast: Men in a stand-by position at home

“I try a lot to lend a hand. My wife has to be present the whole day, and she has to take care of him (the son). So I try... that, when I come home, I play directly with the little one. I think this can be arranged relatively well (...) Even when I was relatively busy, I could still help.”
(Carer 1, ResearchSchool, AT)

Limits of reconciliation between care & career

In general, AutoCom is “very good for the family. Although, at my former (higher) position, it is illusory. The crucial point, when I said, now it's over, was that I should please fly to India for a five hour meeting. That also explains a little bit strikingly, why it can't work with a family. In the end I said, I am no longer willing to pay that price. So I just told myself, you have to choose what you want to leave behind, and marriage and my children are just not that. I also have friends and acquaintances around me who have stayed on the career line, whose marriages are also breaking up now. (...) Money isn't worth it (...) health even less so.”
(Carer 1, ResearchSchool, AT)

Support of superiors – leaders as gatekeepers of work-life balance

“Now that I have children of my own, I realise just how socially minded the company is in terms of work and family. I have the support of my superiors, when the kids are ill, I can probably be relatively flexible, stay at home or work from home”.
(Carer 3, AutoCom, AT)

“When I tell my current boss ‘I have to pick up the children now’ - even if we have a huge emergency - he knows exactly that I have to do it, I'm not saying this for fun. And if I say ‘I'll be back’, then that's the deal we have anyway. (...) It also helps a lot that I know I can always take the children to the office. I don't have anyone to get upset about children crying or screaming, at least on the first day”.

(Carer 5, ResearchSchool, AT)

Read our [national benchmarking reports](#) for more information.

Men in Care progress

MiC during 2020: connected apart

The pandemic and national lockdowns in 2020 found most of our team carrying out interviews to agents involved in promoting caring masculinities in workplaces: managers, labour market experts, trade union representatives and of course men with care responsibilities (and their partners). We have gathered experiences and information from more than 150 agents in 18 organizations, including private companies and public bodies. By using this 360-degree approach (i.e. different perspectives are taken into account) we obtain more complete information about which best practices really work for companies, employees and also their families. Read more on caregivers' experiences [here](#).

The unpredictable event we are all experiencing was considered the right moment to carry out a first SWOT analysis about the functioning of our team, during [one of our international meetings](#), which was held online instead of in Oslo as planned. Covid-19 was clearly identified as our main threat. As our partner Danel from Reform (Norway) points out “the pandemic has drastically changed the way we work in Reform. We are now based in our home, where we work, live and sleep”.

(Image: MiC partners at the online partner meeting in Autumn 2020)



“The pandemic only confirms the importance of WLB for women and men, companies and the society” believes our partner Ziva from the Peace Institute (Slovenia). During these months we have continued trying to gather experiences and reflections from organizations and companies on the new challenges and their solutions, as in this [event](#) organized by our Polish partners.

We all agree that we miss the emotional dimension of communication that only emerges in face-to-face encounters: it is a long time already since we last offered someone ‘let’s have a coffee together and discuss it’. Every cloud has a silver lining, however (or at least that’s what we try to think): for example, our Reform partners have developed a quite advanced technical platform for live broadcasts and national/international meetings “which actually broadens our scope” as Danel explains. Also, as one of our interviewees (expert in a graduate school) points out “presenteism has been of high importance in this area, and maybe the Coronavirus situation has changed something”. Only time will tell what the new balance is between remote and office work, between efficiency and human touch.

So, what’s next?

In 2021, we will be carrying out (online and offline) trainings for managers, male caregivers and trade union representatives on how to enable and foster caring masculinities within organizations in Austria, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Germany and Spain. Want your company to participate? Get in touch with our [national contacts](#).

Our interview: Dr. in Ute Sonnleitner, from “ÖGB-Steinmark” (Austrian Federation of Trade Unions, Styria)

In this issue we interview one member of our associated organization “ÖGB-Steinmark” (Austrian Federation of Trade Unions, Styria). She speaks to us about how Covid-19 is impacting care and work-life balance issues in Austria. Ute studied history and archaeology in Graz, finishing a dissertation on “Resistance against Austrofascism in Styria 1933-1938” in 2009. She has been a researcher and lecturer at the Department of History/Contemporary History (Karl-Franzens-University Graz). As the mother of a two-year old boy herself, she is particularly interested in questions of care.



What have been the most important effects of the Covid-19 situation on care and work-life balance in Austria?

In the course of the first “lock-down” in March and April 2020 and the following months of summer, an intensive discussion on “caring duties” took place in Austria. Media reports were launched; ÖGB (Austrian Federation of Trade Unions) started a campaign aiming to improve the situation. All of the interviews, films and texts focused on one group: women who had to care for their children because schools and kindergartens were more or less closed. It would have been allowed to bring kids in, but ill-defined regulations intimidated parents and for the most part impeded use of these institutions. Therefore, children were at home and with them their parents, who were obliged to work from their home offices. And it was mainly the women who had to deal with the effects

of the occurring multiple stresses. They truly had to bear the burdens of “care”.

So Covid19 consequences on work-life balance have not affected all society in the same way...

Without any doubt, in this situation women were - and still are - among the most affected groups. The Corona-Crisis worked in this sense like a burning-glass: the fact was detected that the concept of a family income, made up by a male bread winner and a female additional earning, is predominant among Austrian families - with the effect that women cover a huge load of the unpaid work. (Ever increasing numbers of female part-time work during the last decades could have shown this long before, but politics as well as the public eye were mostly blind to these tendencies.)

Is Austrian (and European) society advancing in the right way towards “caring masculinities”?

The new-found public interest in the topic child-care and the recognition of its relevance, is very welcome and of great importance; but at the same time it is necessary to call attention to other aspects of care (elders, sick people, disabled people to name only a few) - and to other persons responsible for the duties of care as well: Caring men have to be highlighted and presented. Their example could help to develop a new role-model. This would be one important step - of many others necessary to come - towards a “society of equals”.

Only the fair distribution of caring-responsibilities among all members of society will bring relief to women and offer them the chance to truly live “work-life-balance”.

In Depth: Men need to be with families too: progress towards caring masculinities in MiC countries.

By Teresa Jurado-Guerrero and Irina Fernández-Lozano

Many men do not like to devote their lives only to careers and work, and to pay the price of absence from their families and social environments (Scambor, Wojnicka, & Bergmann, 2012). In all MiC participant countries, men are more affected by overwork (desired work hours being lower than real work hours) than women, with gender differences especially remarkable in Austria and Germany* (Eurofound, [European Working Conditions Survey](#), 2015). The demand for a shift in men’s access to work-life balance resources is expressed timidly yet, given the strongly rooted ‘male breadwinner/female caretaker’ model, as well as other structural economic factors.

Trends to caring masculinities are slow and differ by country. They become visible mainly in two ways: in men’s participation in care work in the family and their use of fathers leave. Men are getting more and more involved in unpaid work, especially in care of children, as the MiC country reports show. In Norway, fathers have increased their daily care work of children in the last decades on average half an hour until 2010. In Spain, fathers with children in preschool age have increased their participation in housework and family care, especially in dishwashing and household upkeep on one hand, and in general childcare and teaching, reading and talking activities with children below age six, on the other hand, between 2003 and 2010. In Poland, between 2000 and 2010 among couples with the youngest child below age 6, men participated slightly more in household and family care duties and significantly more in the care of children (12 pp increase). Likewise, the gender gap in care of family members has narrowed similarly in Slovenia since 2005. In Iceland, fathers’ participation in care of their children has increased constantly from 2000 and onward, or since the legislation on equal rights of both parents to paid parental leave was enacted. Repeated surveys among parents of their first-borns show clearly how fathers increase their share in care of children, not only during the paid parental leave but also after that.

Related to a higher involvement of fathers in the care of children is the increasing uptake of fathers’ leave, when it is non-transferable and highly paid. Fathers in Iceland took on average 40 days of parental leave and it increased to an average of 90 days in 2017. In Spain, as much as 80% of employed fathers had used their entitlement to paternity leave (an average of 30 days) in 2018. In Norway 71% of men who fathered children in 2013 and 2014 used the four-week father’s quota or more days of paid leave. In Slovenia, fathers’ use of paid paternity leave increased from 70% of fathers who used 15 paid days in 2004 to 81% of fathers

in 2017. In Poland, men's use of the statutory paternity leave was of more than 38 men per 100 live births and on average they used 13.2 days in 2016. In Germany, in 2006, only 3.5% of fathers applied for the upbringing allowance, while the new parental benefit was claimed by a much higher number of fathers, up to 37% in 2016. Considering the different options of parental leave in Austria, men's take-up rate is 30,66% within the income-dependent child-care allowance and varies between 10,3% and 26,7% within the different flat-rate allowances depending on the duration of the leave (cf. BMFJ 2018). However, fathers in Austria normally choose shorter time periods of allowance than mothers.

Societal support for male caregivers

There is a variety of ways in which society can contribute creating the proper environment for men to engage in care activities, either paid or unpaid. Male caregivers need first of all to gain visibility, through lobbying, research, campaigns and other far-reaching coordination activities. In recent times, networks, campaigns and organizations promoting alternative forms of masculinity have spread in several European countries, such as the German office Men in Kindergartens or the Polish campaign to promote the use of paternity leave ("Pole! Go on paternity leave!" 2008). More examples can be found in the contextual reports for Germany and Poland.

Trade unions play a decisive role in putting work-life balance issues in the political agenda. In Iceland, this is the case for the demand of a shorter work week for all working population. In some countries (like Norway) some companies are already pioneering this change, with positive results in terms of productivity and employees' wellbeing. A 40 hour work week is quite unsustainable for most dual-earner couples with childcare responsibilities, especially for those in the low and middle-class who cannot outsource domestic work. Therefore, families tend to adopt the 'one-and-a-half' earner model (Hook & Wolfe, 2013) by which it is women who end up decreasing their participation in the labour market. Public discourses on work-life balance should underscore the business case for serious commitments with employees' work-life balance needs, without any gender (or other) bias. Providing employees with family and personal time is in companies' best interest too.

The introduction of company certificates can enhance companies' adoption of good practices. In some countries, Family-friendly certificates are acquiring increasing popularity among companies, but, as in the case of Slovenia or Spain, they do not introduce a clear gender perspective, so indicators end up being targeted at women. Gender Equality Plans are important instruments to contribute overcoming these biases.

In general, companies are taking steps to create parents-friendly environments in workplaces through a variety of measures: from establishing "office core hours" for meetings to mentoring systems for men on leave. As our Austrian and German partners point out, how effective these measures are depends substantially on their being based on (space and time) flexibility for employees, and their having a long-term scope. Supervisors and co-workers engagement with male employees' adopting work-life balance measures is crucial. As our Icelandic partners put it: "[e]mployees may be more attuned to such [supervisors' and coworkers' support] signals as they are more immediate and in any case, costs of caring are accrued on the floor rather than in vaguely worded policy documents".

To end with, it must be underscored that care goes beyond parenting. A further step to

take by national and company level policies must be to overcome the assumption that care equals parenting, as the variety of caregivers' models will increase with the ageing of society, and alternative forms of care (as care for the elderly or disable) should gain more visibility.

References

Hook, J. L., & Wolfe, C. M. (2013). Parental involvement and work schedules: Time with children in the United States, Germany, Norway and the United Kingdom. *European Sociological Review*, 29 (3), 411–425. doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcr081

Scambor, E., Wojnicka, K., & Bergmann, N. (Eds.). (2012). *The Role of Men in Gender Equality - European strategies & insights*.

** In Austria the percentages are 25% (women) and 32%(men), in Germany 25% and 34%, in Spain 28% and 34%, in Norway 28% and 29%, in Poland 20% and 26%, and in Slovenia 24% and 28%. No data available for Iceland.*

Thank you for reading!
Keep up to date with the Men in Care project

[MiC Website](#)

[Sign up for the newsletter + view the MiC newsletter archive](#)

[MiC project results](#)



About the *Men in Care* Project

The MiC project runs for three years from March 2019 to February 2022. Below are a list of organisations involved in the project:

Austria

- Verein für Männer- und Geschlechterthemen Steiermark (VMG) - *partner*
- ÖGB-Steiermark/Austrian Trade Union of the region Steiermark (ÖGB)

EU

- European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Germany

- European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (WWP EN) - *partner*
- European Academy for Women in Politics and Business (EAF Berlin)
- Bundesforum Männer/Federal Forum Men – Interest Association for Boys, Men and Fathers

Iceland

- University of Iceland - *partner*
- Alþýðusamband Íslands/Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ)

Norway

- REFORM - Resources Centre for Men - *partner*
- Vest-Agder County Council / Equal Work Life
- The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud of Norway
- #ShesGotThis

Poland

- Jagiellonian University - *partner*
- PLinEU - *partner*
- Diversity Hub - *partner*
- Konfederacja Lewiatan/Polish Confederation Lewiatan

Slovenia

- The Peace Institute - *partner*
- Association of Employers of Slovenia (ZDS) - *partner*
- The association of free trade unions of Slovenia (ZSSS) - *partner*

Spain

- National Distance Education University (UNED) - *coordinator*
- Fundación I de Mayo - *partner*
- International Platform for Equal and Non-transferable Parental Leave, Spanish chapter (PPiINA)
- Municipality of Madrid
- The Basque Institute for Women/Emakunde
- Red NUST-Ajuntament de Barcelona
- DenBBora

Cofinancing



 Bundesministerium
Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit
und Konsumentenschutz

