

## Transnational Analysis of Studies on Company Support for Male Care Work - Summary

This report discusses the role of organizations in supporting men in undertaking care duties, based on the findings from MiC research on caring masculinities in six countries. We studied public, private, or non-profit organizations of different sectors which already implemented some good practices in terms of reconciliation of care and professional work. Over the last decades, organizations have become more interested in supporting men's care as active fathers or other activities in family care. We could identify three main dimensions of barriers and supportive factors, which constitute a remedy to the challenges described by the male carers and professionals in the organizations. (a) The structural conditions cover the size and location of organization, working structures, work responsibilities and access to work-life balance (WLB) measures. More diverse companies with higher numbers of employees and a variety of WLB policies tend to have more pronounced solutions towards caring masculinities, while the inability to substitute an employee, unequal access to WLB measures and blurred boundaries between work and private life while using flexible work arrangements as well as heavy workload negatively affect the company's support for the involvement of men in care. (b) Equally important are cultural factors. From this perspective, the organizational culture and gender culture are key to understand the opportunities for male employees to combine work and care. On the one hand, the lack of speak up culture and clear communication strategy increasing the awareness of solutions as well as hegemonic masculinity illustrate an insufficient recognition and low commitment of the company to values promoting care. On the other hand, when it comes to supporting male carers, our study can distinguish cultures of security, cultures of diversity and inclusion as well as gender equality as driving mechanisms. (c) Finally, the degree to which organization supports caring masculinities is determined by human factors, namely by managers/direct superiors, representatives of HR or D&I, trade unions and employees' networks. Technocratic, inflexible and restrictive types of management negatively affect policies and measures supporting male carers while inclusive and supportive leadership facilitate gender equality and caring masculinities.

The identification and examination of these factors is a starting point for the assessment of the development of an organization towards gender equality and its allocation in the three phases model developed in the Work Changes Gender project (2001-2004). The MiC “best practice” organizations have recognised the needs of male carers and address them in a framework of gender equality, WLB and care policies. These organizations are located mostly in the middle phase: they have already overcome the structural, cultural and human barriers as a result of initiatives taken by both male employees and organizations. Yet, due to the uneven impact of supportive and hindering conditions, few companies are also on the leap from the early to middle phase or from middle to the advance phase. Companies which are on the leap to the middle phase face mostly barriers related to cultural factors. The progress towards gender equality and caring masculinities is hindered by traditional mind-sets and ignorant approaches among superiors. This is also strongly associated with patriarchal traditions that affect company cultures and working structures. The change is also prevented due to horizontal and vertical segregations and therefore a lack in gender equality and a need for greater diversity and inclusion of women on a leadership and managerial position. Male carers are not common and there is little support for caring masculinity, often based on informal agreement. While answering the question: what motivate the companies to transition to middle phase, the MiC study reveals four types of driving forces. The companies can be (1) gender-equality driven, (2) care-value driven, (3) productivity-competition driven or (4) progress-innovation driven. Depending on the strongest factor causing change, the studied companies have differently addressed caring masculinities and offer different types of support. Despite these differences, the companies in the middle phase also share some similarities. They are usually more diverse and also focus on equality and inclusion. Progressive gender orientation, however, coexists with more traditional or gender-conservative approaches in some companies. This tension occurs both among employees and at the top level, hindering the reconciliation of work and care. As a result, organizations face insufficient implementation of measures directed at caring masculinities and weak recognition of other aspects of care besides fatherhood.

The WLB measures are offered to all employees and are based on the individual decision whether and how they will be used. Therefore, reaching WLB is associated more with individual behaviour leading to more support for women than men. In the companies which are on their way to the advanced level we can observe more male carers among employees and an increased use of WLB by men. The most important factor supporting this change is related to the company culture which creates a safe environment for using WLB. Yet, even in the more advanced companies there are no tailored measures for caring masculinities.

The report closes with recommendations for different levels of workplace changes: (1) environmental and peripheral conditions pointing to suitable legislation, public (financial) support as the precondition for recognising caring responsibilities of men as well as to the role of collective agreements, initiatives and networks; (2) flexible work & leave structures which identify the importance of spatial flexibility, reduction of worktime, alternative work models or substitution arrangements; (3) improved knowledge and communication at company level ranging from own company specific WLB plan for male employees through image campaign on fatherhood and HR/career development to developing fathers' groups and networks or organizing social events for families; (4) culture, training & awareness to promote, among others, speak-up culture, 'one-to-one meetings', well-meant initiatives and mutual benefits of gender equality and caring masculinities; (5) leadership and networks, and (6) further studies and concepts to feed up academic debates.