

Men in care

WORKPLACE SUPPORT FOR CARING MASCULINITIES

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1. 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.



2. Work-life balance in the EU... What's going on?

EU

In 2017, the European Commission proposed the Work-Life Balance directive. The four main areas of focus are: paternity leave, parental leave, carers' leaves and flexible working arrangements. Earlier this year, the European Council actually adopted the directive (which also supports those taking on caring roles for their relatives). Member states have three years to update their laws to comply with the new EU guidelines.

Austria

Parents of children born after March 1st, 2017 can choose between the income-dependent childcare allowance and the new childcare allowance account. The Family Time Bonus Act (Familienzeitbonusgesetz) provides fathers with statutory paternity leave and benefits for the first time. Parents that share parental leave receive a partnership bonus (Partnerschaftsbonus, €500 per parent). The "papa month", a bonus/lump sum for fathers staying at home was introduced in summer 2019.

Germany

In 2007, the Federal parental benefit was introduced and since then, around 37% of eligible fathers currently take parental leave (up from 3.5%). In 2015, the law was supplemented by better options for part-time work. The 2008 law on care-related leave strengthened employees' rights to take working time off to care for relatives. According to the Federal Forum of Men, "the proportion of men caring at home has increased to more than one third of the total private carers." However, despite its narrowing, the gender care gap in Germany is still at 52.4%.

Iceland

The Icelandic government has introduced a bill extending parental leave in two steps. Next year the leave will be extended from nine to ten months with each parent having four months of non-transferable rights and two months that can be shared. From 2021 fathers will have five months parental leave, mothers the same and two months will be sharable. The bill is expected to be passed without difficulties. The bill was passed so the leave is now 10 months, four for each parent and two sharable. Two months are to be added in 2021. However, the division of the leave unexpectedly was subject to a heated debate and in the end it was decided to refer that to a committee that is currently revising the law as a whole.

Norway

Parents have the right to adapt work schedules and work part time for a period of time. Employees in general also have the right to take unpaid leave to attend to relatives in need of care. Fathers are entitled to 15 weeks of the total parental leave of 49/59 weeks. That means that fathers normally have paternity leave for 15-39 weeks, usually in their child's first year. Paternity leave is an individual and non-transferable right also in Norway, paid at 80/100 %, with a ceiling of 60 000 € per year. Most fathers take up their designated paternity leave.

Poland

Since 2013, fathers enjoy a right to share parental leave with their partner. After changes in 2015, the leave comprises 32 weeks which can be entirely transferred between partners

(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.

Slovenia

Men are entitled to paternity and parental leave as well as the leave to care for an ill family member. Since 2014, paternity leave (an individual, non-transferable, fully-paid leave) consists of 30 calendar days, to be taken until the child completes the first elementary school year. The introduction of paternity leave fostered men uptake of parental leave (a 9-month leave existing since 1986), but it is still low. The leave to care for an ill co-resident family member consists of seven working days (80% of individual earnings), which can be taken for each illness person.

Spain

Since April 2019 companies over 50 employees must establish gender equality plans and employees have now the right to ask for an adaptation of the organisation of working time and the place of work for WLB reasons. Collective agreements will specify criteria to implement these measures, guaranteeing no discrimination by gender. In addition, fathers can enjoy of a longer paternity leave: from previous 5 to current 8 weeks, which will be gradually extended up to 16 (as current maternity leave) in 2021. Paternity leave is an individual right, which is non-transferable and paid at 100% (with a ceiling of 4070€ per month). For more info read our [in-depth article](#).

3. Caring masculinities in context

Work-life balance for men in Austria, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Poland, Slovenia and Spain

We are currently finishing the contextual reports for each country based on comparable European surveys on paid and unpaid work of women and men. The objective is to assess how gender inequalities have evolved and to what extent men are stepping into housework and care activities. Two comparative figures exemplify the content of MiC's contextual analyses.

European Labour Force Surveys ask employed women and men if they did not work last week (the reference week) because they were on leave to care for a child. Even if these data do not capture accurately all people on leave, they provide comparable cross-country and cross-time measures on the gender gap in using leave (except for Norway and Iceland). The figure shows the ratio of the proportion of women on leave divided by the proportion of men on leave in one week (gender gap). For 2017, we see that the gender gaps in the take-up rates of a leave to care for a child, below age one, are smallest in Spain, Germany, and Slovenia. The country reports explain the existing national parental leave systems that help to understand these differences. The good news is that the gender gaps have diminished in all countries due to the introduction of paternity leave or fathers' quota (Austria in 2000, Slovenia in 2003, Germany and Spain in 2007, and Poland in 2010) and the extension of these (Austria in 2005, Slovenia in 2014, Spain since 2017 progressively).

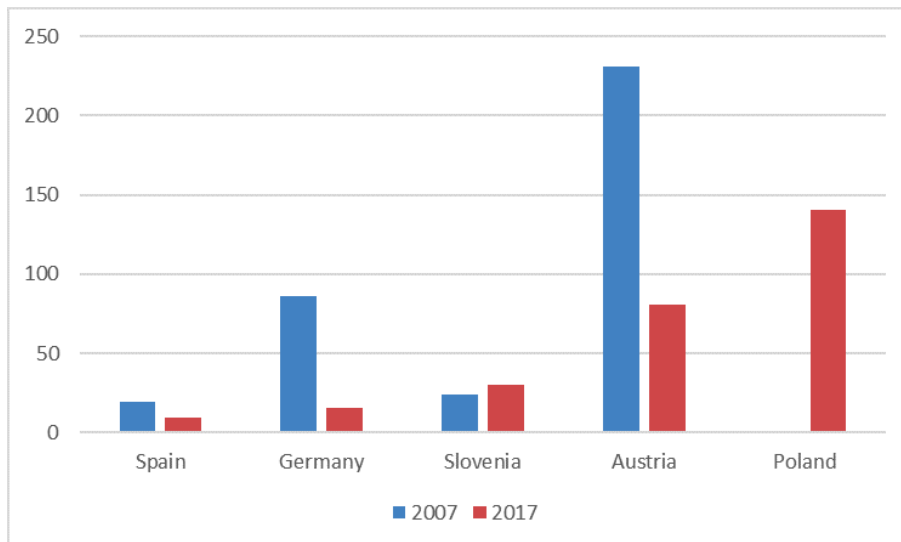


Figure 1. Gender gap, people with any child under age 1 on leave. Source: own elaboration with European Labour Force Surveys, 2007/2017. Poland had no leave for fathers in 2007.

Figure 2 shows the difference in time spent in any household activity by women and men in six of our member countries. As we can observe there are remarkable differences in the time women and men spend in this kind of activities across countries: from more than 5 daily hours in the case of Polish women to around 2 hours in the case of Austrian men. The smallest gender gap is found in Norway, due both to the behaviour of men and women: the highest time spent for men (2 hours, 50 minutes) as well as the lowest time spent among women (3 hours, 59 minutes) is found in this country. At the other side of the spectrum, the highest gender gap (2 hours, 48 minutes) is found in Poland, to a great extent due to the high time spent by women.

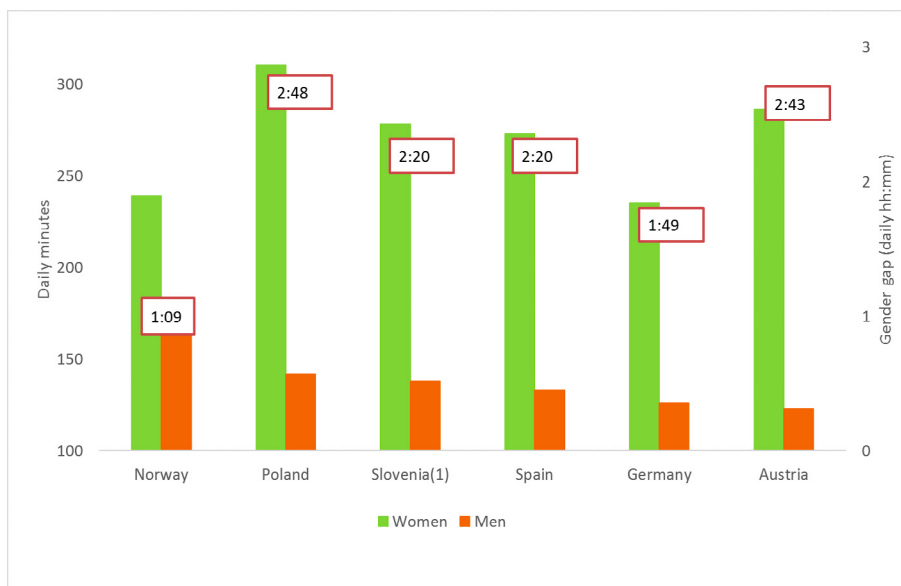


Figure 2. Daily minutes spent and gender gap in household and care activities by people aged 25-44, 2010. Source: own elaboration with European Time Use Surveys retrieved from Eurostat. (1) Data for Slovenia refer to 2000. The following activities are included (excepting when performed as informal help provided to other households): food management, household upkeep, making and care for textiles, gardening and pet care, construction and repairs, shopping and services, household management, childcare, help to an adult family member and unspecified household and care activities. Figures in boxes (hh:mm) show the daily gender gap.

4. Men in Care progress

A network of agents for change

Since March 15 2019, when the project began, a number of public, private and non-profit organisations have shown their interest in taking part in the MiC network. Representatives from some of them have already participated in one of the events organised in five of our partner countries during Summer and Autumn 2019: Austria, Norway, Poland, Slovenia and Spain. Each of the events was organised taking into account the particular country-specific needs in terms of gender equality in work-life balance.



The first event took place in **Madrid, Spain** (on July 10th) where representatives from [different work life balance stakeholders](#) and companies had the opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities of the new paternity leave (introduced in April 2019) in different workgroups. In addition, the [Network DenBBora](#) for Innovative Uses of Time in Bilbao, the Area of Families, Equality and Social Welfare of the [Municipality of Madrid](#) and the [Time and Economics Care Programme of the Municipality of Barcelona](#) have shown interest to participate in MiC as associate partners.

In **Ljubljana, Slovenia**, the event (September 11th) entitled “Caring companies - challenges in the work environment” was an opportunity for different stakeholders and companies to present the existing good practices of work -life balance in companies in Slovenia, and to discuss about the importance of workplace support for caring masculinities and in general, for a caring society (see below our interview with one of the participants).

Our **Polish partners** organised two events (on September 17th and 30th) gathering the representatives of corporations, small companies, non-governmental organisations, poviats labour office as well as experts and researchers. During both meetings the participants discussed, among others, the measures and tools implemented in their workplaces to support men in taking care-giving roles.

In **Graz/Austria**, the first two multiplier events took place on October 10th, in cooperation with the Austrian Trade Union Association ÖGB. In the first closed group workshop, four relevant stakeholders took part, as representatives of labour and company institutions (e.g. the Vice President of the Labour Market Service). In the second workshop, 11 representatives of different organisations (private and public companies, NGOs, trade union, repre-

senting technical, but also social and cultural institutions) took part. Some companies' good practices were shared (like 'Makava', part-time work with full-time payment).

Finally, the last event took place in **Oslo** on October 16th, and it was held in collaboration with The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) and the associated organisations in Norway. We enjoyed the company and very inspiring speeches of the state secretary from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the equality and anti-discrimination ombudsperson, as well as representatives from 20 different companies who were interested in discussing men's involvement in care work.

We found that there are many organisations that want to promote men's roles as caregivers: not only as fathers, but also as partners, sons or neighbours, but they do not always know which changes need to be implemented. In some cases the know-how is lacking; in others, there are visible or invisible structural barriers for social change. Some participants acknowledged this was the first time they thought about the relation of men and care more deeply.



So what's next?

MiC aims now to dig deeper into those cutting-edge companies and organisations which are pioneering social change for men to improve their work-life balance and be fully involved in care. We aim to gain knowledge on good practices that work and answer some of these questions: what triggered the implementation of a particular policy /good practice? In which sense does it enable men to be 'caring men'? In which sense does it benefit the well-being of staff and the organisation as a whole? Want to share your experience? Get in touch with our [national contacts](#).

5. Our interview: Rok Praprotnik, working father of four children.

Rok Praprotnik is a father of four children, former journalist and former deputy chief commissioner at the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption of the Republic of Slovenia, and currently the head of the Compliance at the Nova Ljubljanska banka. When his second child was born, Rok and his wife decided to equally share 9 months of parental leave, which, in his opinion, proved to be one of the best life decisions. When the twins were born, there were no doubts about sharing the parental leave with his wife. In his view, parental leave is a gift for both the child and the parent, since it enables to create a deep connection between them.



What was the motive to share the parental leave with your wife? What was the arrangement of sharing it?

At the beginning the issue was raised by my wife, who is a successful entrepreneur- how she would be able to reconcile long absence for taking care of the child and her business. So, we started talking and looking for a solution. We also had a role model in our family, where some male relatives took part of the parental leave. At the end, we opted for half-time leave for the period of 260 days of parental leave. This means that I was at home with my children for 2.5 days per week and the rest 2.5 days I was at work. So, when I was at home with the children, my wife was in her company, and when I was at work, my wife would be with the children.

What would you say, being on parental leave, being a caring father has brought to you personally and to your relation with children?

I feel that I'm very connected with my children also due to the fact that I was actively involved in caring for them from the beginning. And children have incorporated in their 'operating systems' my involvement, my constant presence and engagement. In everyday life this was seen in situations when the absence of the mother was never a problem. This also proves that both parents are equally important for the child.

What were the responses from your employer when you announced using the parental leave?

My decision to take parental leave was fully supported by the employer. Both times, when I worked in the private sector and when I was employed in the public sector. When I was on parental leave for the first boy I also started a new working contract with a new employer. So, during the last month of my parental leave I was already in a new job. And I received all the support and understanding from my colleagues as well as from the employer.

What were the responses from your social network, your friends?

The reactions were positive. Of course, there was lots of joking on my account from my male friends, which is quite common and part of teasing between boys. But they were also surprised and were wondering how I'm handling all the care for children.

6. In Depth: Paid father's leave of 8 weeks in Spain. Towards gender equality in entitlement to well-paid leaves.

Last March, the Spanish government issued a “revolutionary” legal decree with the objective to reach gender equality in entitlement to well-paid maternity and paternity leave by January 2021. Maternity leave in Spain has a length of 16 weeks and social security replaces 100% of the previous wage (with a ceiling of 4070 € per month). Paternity leave has a length of 8 weeks since last 1st of April and is also paid at 100%. By January 2020 its lengths will be increased to 12 weeks and by January 2021 to 16 weeks. If this decree is fully implemented, then Spain will be the first country in the world with a 100% paid individual and non-transferable leave of four months for both genders alike. Currently, Iceland and Sweden have three months of non-transferable leave for fathers paid at 80% and 77.6% of previous wage (with ceilings). Norway offers 3,4 months of leave for fathers paid at 100% (with ceilings). By 2021 Spain is thought to offer a more generous leave reserved for fathers in terms of duration and wage replacement than in Iceland, Sweden and Norway. In addition, the Spanish paternity leave will have the same duration as the leave for mothers, because well-paid leave for mothers in Spain is much shorter than in Iceland, Norway and Sweden. In Spain, no paid parental leave exists after maternity leave, because the existing leave (excedencia) is unpaid. In the three northern countries total well-paid parental leave available for mothers (individual and family entitlement) ranges from 6 months in Iceland, to 8,6 in Norway and 12,8 in Sweden, while in Spain it amounts to the 3,7 months (16 weeks) of maternity leave (International Review on Leave Policies and Related Research 2019, p. 57). So, gender equality in the entitlement and use of leave does not exist in these northern countries. This is the result of the conjunction of leave design and distinctive take-up patterns by gender. Most men only use well-paid and non-transferable leave, whereas most mothers make an accumulative use of the leave reserved for them and transferable leaves (family entitlement). How has Spain arrived at this design of individual, non-transferable and well-paid leave that will promote an equal use of 16 weeks of leave by mothers and fathers?

[Read more on our website.](#)



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

