



# Role of Men in Gender Equality

## Executive Summary

Study on the Role of Men in Gender Equality

Contract ref. no. VC/2010/0592

September 2012

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kompetent für frauen und wirtschaft

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Prepared for European Commission, DG Justice - Unit D2 Gender equality

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This publication is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013).

This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

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Vienna/Berlin/Graz, September 2012

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# 1 Introduction

Gender relations have increasingly changed throughout the past decades, and European gender politics have productively accompanied these improvements. Still Europe is far from being a gender-equal society.

For a long period gender equality policy has been contextualised mainly as a 'women's issue' – as women have been the driving force behind gender equality strategies and have been seen as the only ones who benefit from a more equal society. Men as the 'other gender' have been taken less into account in the context of gender equality.

In the last decade, however, men and masculinities have increasingly become subjects of studies and gender policies in the EU. Under EU presidency, conferences on men, masculinities and equality have taken place in Sweden (2001) and Finland (2006). The *Roadmap on equality between women and men 2006-2010*<sup>1</sup> specifically encouraged men to take up care responsibilities and to share leave entitlements with women. A horizontal priority on gender roles including the need for involvement of men in gender equality policies and addressing inequalities affecting men, such as early school leaving, literacy and occupational health, is present in the current *European Commission Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010-2015)*<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, strategies like gender mainstreaming seem to have created an initial awareness of the issue of men in gender equality and the establishment of some pathways towards institutional practice. Therefore, contemporary gender equality strategies as well as scientific studies should involve both men and women and take into account analysis of the role of both genders in promoting gender equality, dismantling structural inequalities and changing gender roles.

## Objectives of the report and methodology used

The report “*Study on the Role of Men in Gender Equality*” is meant **to provide a better knowledge of the role and positioning of men in gender equality issues**. Men's practices and interests regarding gender equality vary, partly due to differences in provider roles and economic circumstances, but also due to different social, political and cultural patterns. In the past decade a special focus on men has emerged at the European level and the amount of research as well as specific strategies have increased. Still, there is little systematised knowledge about men's practices regarding gender equality in the different European countries. This report is **the first European study which undertakes systematic research** of the EU 27 member states plus the associated EFTA states<sup>3</sup> in the following fields:

- the importance of education and work in the context of increasing men's contribution to gender equality,
- the involvement of men in family, care and household responsibilities,
- men's health,
- men's violence and
- men's participation in gender equality policy.

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1 European Commission (2006). Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010), Brussels. [http://www.untj.org/docs/country\\_context/gender/Gender\\_policies/EU-Gender\\_Equality\\_Roadmap\\_2006-2010.pdf](http://www.untj.org/docs/country_context/gender/Gender_policies/EU-Gender_Equality_Roadmap_2006-2010.pdf)

2 European Commission (2010). Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010-2015). [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/document/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/document/index_en.htm)

3 In 2012, the European Institute for Gender Equality published Study report: the involvement of men in gender equality in the European Union where the authors focus on mapping relevant actors (organisations, groups and networks ) whose activity is considered to contribute to a more effective male involvement in the promotion of gender equality.

It offers international insights allowing for comparisons<sup>4</sup> and it refers to the **costs of traditional gender roles** as well as to the **benefits of gender equality**, especially focussing on the role of men and on innovative practices.

The main results serve as a source for recommendations developed in order to improve the role of men in gender equality across Europe. The **recommendations** are supposed to lead to changes on the structural level, to the development of political measures and their institutionalisation as well as to practical initiatives. All these ideas and empirically-based recommendations are targeted at policy-makers and other stakeholders at EU, national and industry levels in order to better design and implement gender-equality policies taking into account the role of men.

## **A balanced approach to men and gender equality**

The focus on men regarding gender equality always includes women at the same time. **Gender equality needs to address both genders** in order to sustainably change predominant gender imbalances and inequalities in European societies. Supporting a better work-family balance for men, for example, is not only a supportive measure for men, but an important step to achieve a more equal distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men.

**Dominant models of masculinities** – like the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’<sup>5</sup>, a cultural norm that continuously connects men to power and economic achievements, are adverse to equality and inclusion. These models are constantly modified and subject to historical changes, influenced also by the change of women’s participation in society in the last 50 years. New configurations of men’s or women’s practices have effects on gender order and hierarchies. **The role of men is changing and ‘caring masculinity’** is an alternative model based on care-giving roles of men instead of breadwinner. ‘Caring masculinity’ is already taking place in the everyday lives of men, when they take over care-giving practices, especially within families or when they work in ‘feminine’ professions of care (like Kindergartens), which can be seen as a contribution to gender equality. Traditionally this kind of work has been framed as ‘unmanly’, but the situation has changed within the last decades. On top of that, widening the concept of ‘care’ towards ‘self care’ (awareness for health or emotional issues, deeper friendships, less risk-taking, etc.) has a direct benefit for men themselves.

**Men are not a homogenous group** (nor are women) **but a diverse one** through ethnic backgrounds, physical and mental abilities, etc. Some groups of men benefit most from unequal power relations whilst others face disadvantages. Taking into account the role of men in promoting gender equality means focussing on areas where men are disadvantaged and on areas where they are privileged.

Involving men in gender mainstreaming and gender-equality strategies bears the risk that gender is framed within certain terms in traditional sex role theory<sup>6</sup>, mainly reflecting topics where men seem to be disadvantaged (f.e. custody, education or health), opening up anti-feminist discussion. Addressing men’s involvement in gender equality by only stressing men’s disadvantages will lead to very simplistic and misleading assumptions. Therefore one important preconception guiding the study is **to link pro-feminist, progressive and critical men’s policies<sup>7</sup> and studies to gender equality policy**, while rejecting a ‘male-discrimination’-perspective (pursued for example by ‘men’s rights groups’) and those theories linked to this approach.<sup>8</sup>

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4 Theory based country cluster concepts as well as geographically and historically framed clusters were defined in order to make comparable results more comprehensible. Geographically Northern, Western, Eastern and Southern European countries were clustered into distinct groups.

5 Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press

6 In traditional sex role theory the role of men is based on the essentialist and biological definition of masculinity. It involves a set of expectations which define certain practices and behaviours. Among them strength, control, domination as well as giving protection and participation in the public sphere can be singled out.

7 Pro-feminist men’s initiatives and policies underline the fact that contemporary gender hierarchies are harmful both for men and women although women are still the group which is more oppressed while men are drifting between privileges and cost of being representatives of the dominant group.

8 Men’s rights approaches underline only costs of masculinity and describe men as a social group which is discriminated due to feminist progress.

In order to develop a **balanced approach to men and gender equality** unmasking men's privileges, focusing on relations in the gender system (instead of focusing solely on men) and recognising social divisions among men are important aspects to consider. Gender equality strategies need complex analyses to find appropriate policy conclusions. The report gives detailed figures and focuses on trends to enable a thorough base for these analyses, and also uses findings from critical studies on men, masculinities and gender equality.

## 2 Main findings

### 2.1 Men, gender equality and education

Gender equality issues in **education** have changed over the last decades. Whereas from the 1970s onwards gender equality in education predominantly focused on women, the **narrowing of the gender gap in favour of female students** in recent years has reverted the focus on the perceived **underachievement of male students**.

On average, from 2001 to 2010 education attainment has increased across the EU member states for both men and women. A more in-depth view shows that the **increase of female attainment rate in tertiary education is almost twice as high (14%) as that of men's (7.6%)**. In 2010 30% of all men and 37% of all women (EU 27 and EFTA) between 30 and 34 years of age had attained a tertiary education level.

More than two thirds of the EU member states and EFTA states have reported **slight increases or stable rates of men's attainment in upper secondary education** (from 74% in 2001 to 76.2% in 2010). A similar growth has appeared for young women. Differences among men appear to have an effect on attainment rates in upper secondary education; **lower attainment rates have been reported for men with immigrant backgrounds**.

**Gender segregation** is a strong characteristic of the labour market and it is mirrored in education. **Boys and girls predominantly choose traditional areas in education** (girls: social and care-giving fields of education; boys: engineering, manufacturing and construction). In fact, **the participation rate of men in the field of education, health and welfare has declined (2000–2009)** in most of Europe. Research has outlined different reasons for the low rates of men in female dominant fields of education (i.e. deeply-lodged gendered assumptions in organisational practices, parental influence, teacher and peer and the lack of gender-sensitive vocational guidance programs for male students).

The rate of **male early school leavers has slightly declined in the past ten years**. In 2010, 16% of all young men (aged between 18 and 24) were classified as early school leavers as compared to 12% of young women. It is noteworthy that boys and girls are more highly-educated than ever before. **However, social class and migrant background have important effects on educational performances**. The rate of migrant early school leavers is considerably higher than the rate of non-migrant early school leavers.

Public discourse and policies about gender equality in education have strongly focused on the 'boy's crisis' in recent years. The discussion varies: some explanations predominantly draw a causal connection between the underachievement of boys and the gender of teachers (feminisation) while other explanations point to gender stereotypes at school (lacking in knowledge and consciousness of gender identities, especially in Eastern and Southern European countries).

The results of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 show relevant **gender gaps in reading** (where girls outperform boys) and **mathematics** (where boys outperform girls) and indicate the important influence of socio-economic status on learning outcomes. Qualitative analysis makes obvious that **mostly lower class boys ascribe themselves to traditional patterns of masculinity, which in turn hinders them from educational success**. This can be seen as a driving factor for the disengagement of boys.



## Education-related recommendations

- Conducting initiatives and campaigns for students and teachers to promote gender equality focusing on boys in atypical occupations at the national level.
- Socially-inclusive learning strategies, which value informal skills and competences are needed in order to keep disadvantaged groups of young people in education. Awards for schools that value informal skills will help strengthening this strategy. This can be fostered through EU educational programs and implemented by national authorities.
- Support the development of gender equality standards related to the intersectional approach in educational institutions (EU level). On member states levels, schools should be required to implement these standards (concrete equality targets and measures which are monitored, evaluated and reported).
- Integrating gender awareness programs for teachers and students in order to encourage working against discrimination in schools (national level). Competences, skills and knowledge should help to improve the awareness for gender stereotypes, gender typical professions and life courses.
- Conducting further analysis of teaching styles, textbooks and learning materials in order to outline the impact of educational materials on gendered practices and occupational preferences (EU and national authority levels).
- Support the development of special VET<sup>9</sup> programs (dual system model of education) in order to raise the chance for disadvantaged groups to stay in education (national level).

## 2.2 Men, gender equality and work

The **social relations of work** represent some of the most fundamental aspects of gender relations as well as some of the most important elements in the 'construction' of men and men's relation to women and children. Paid work has figured and continues to figure as a central source of men's identity, status and power.

Based on study results, a **convergence of basic labour market characteristics** between men and women has to be noted: The convergence is evident in the **employment rate**, where the gender gap declined by 5.2% between 2000 and 2010, due to **the increase in women's** and the **decrease in men's employment rates** (in 2010 men's employment rate was 70.1% compared to women's employment rate which was 58.2%). This convergence is weaker in terms of paid working time (gap decline of 0.4% due to a reduction of weekly work hours (men: - 1.2 h/w and women: - 0.8 h/w).

The **economic crisis** initially had a stronger impact on men and men's employment, but later a higher impact on women, due to cutbacks in state services.

Nevertheless, the increasing convergence of employment for both men and women is strongly connected to **crises in male-dominated sectors of the industry**. Among men, working class men, unskilled men in former manufacturing industry and rural regions and male youth have increasingly been affected by job losses. Some authors argue that diminishing these traditional resources have produced a 'crisis for men'. In fact, difficulties experienced by men in adapting to the new economic challenges are indicated, the **shift from a 'masculine' model of work and life** (full-time work, continuous working patterns) **to a rather 'feminine' model** (discontinuous, flexible and insecure). **Changing economies** – from heavy industry and manufacturing to female dominated service-based sectors – as well as **globalisation** have influenced men's prospects in secure long-term employment, as these cannot be put into practice any longer. This leads to an erosion of the 'male breadwinner model'.

Concerning the pay-off of education, a clear **connection between lower secondary education and lower employment rates** is drawn. The precarious labour market position of lowly educated

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<sup>9</sup> VET: Vocational education and training



people in Europe (especially in the male dominated traditional industry) has become worse in the past ten years and is likely to deteriorate in the course of the current economic crisis.

Another aspect is that a gendered division of work is still visible in the represented countries: **men with young children continue to have higher employment rates compared to those without children**, while for women the opposite holds. Unequal share of care-giving work in the family has a direct impact on gender segregation too because it still drives women to decide for a part-time job in order to reconcile work and family, whereas men predominantly persist in full-time work arrangements.

**Part-time work** is still a **work form** highly dominated by women (31.4% women and 7.8% men; 2010). It is noteworthy that countries with the lowest working hours for men are also leaders in men's part-time rates (Netherlands, Norway and Denmark). Moreover, low gaps of working hours between men and women coincide with comparably low part-time rates of women and vice versa.

In the last decade, women have made significant inroads into some traditionally male-dominated sectors, whereas **men** have mainly remained in **traditionally male-dominated professions**. Men's share among 'care workers' ranges between 20% and 8% in the different EU member states and EFTA states in 2009. It is noteworthy that male-dominated jobs provide better conditions (better payment, social esteem, professional reputation) than female-dominated jobs. This situation calls for a restructuring of working conditions in traditionally female-dominated occupations.

**Concerning vertical segregation**,<sup>10</sup> gender changes in middle management and in professions have been reported for some countries in recent years, while very slow changes appear in the upper hierarchies of business, science and technology. In the top-listed companies across Europe, a typical board of ten has one female member (in 97% of cases the board is chaired by a man). Some countries have already implemented or are still discussing legal requirements in order to change the gender imbalance at the top of companies (Norway: each sex should be represented by at least 40% on their boards).

The **gender pay gap** – a central issue in men's and women's relation to work and family– has persisted over the past ten years (EU 27: 16.4% unadjusted gender pay gap in 2010). Large gaps are outlined for older age groups.

**The public sector**, which employs a relatively high proportion of women, has in many countries moved strongly towards **equal opportunity principles and practices**, often ahead of the private sector. It offers more secure standard jobs with more regular working hours, stable income, social security and possibilities for work and family reconciliation. Men (over-represented in the private sector) are more exposed to work-related health risks compared to women. Workplace studies confirm that on the whole, men are more reluctant than women to say that their jobs leave them vulnerable.

An empirical **connection between work satisfaction and actual working time** is visible: Male employees in the EU 27 are predominantly satisfied with their working conditions if their numbers of weekly working hours are low and vice versa.

Men's attitudes have slowly shifted **from clear provider roles towards care-integrating models** (especially fathering) in the past decades, while companies predominantly do not change their views on men. Most companies still reproduce traditional gender roles when they expect men to devote their lives to work and women caring for children. Therefore, formal and legal regulations are crucial for men who care, as they provide a clear sense of entitlement.

### Work-related recommendations

- EU programs should continue to focus on the integration of marginalized groups of men (working class, unskilled and young men) into the labour market. It can be done, for example, by in-

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<sup>10</sup> "Vertical segregation refers to the under (over) representation of a clearly identifiable group of workers in occupations or sectors at the top of an ordering based on 'desirable' attributes – income, prestige, job stability etc, independent of the sector of activity. Under-representation at the top of occupation-specific ladders was subsumed under the heading of 'vertical segregation', whereas it is now more commonly termed 'hierarchical segregation'" (Bettio, F. & Verashchagina, A. [2009]. Gender segregation in the labour market. Root causes, implications and policy responses in the EU. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 32)

creasing the number of social projects addressed to the representatives of marginalized groups of men.

- Work-life-balancing can be fostered through political programs, which focus on an increase of non-sanctioned and self-chosen part-time, job-sharing and other flexible forms of employment for men, with sufficient income from shorter working hours.
- With the shift from traditional industries to the services sector it is important for young men to also consider a wider range of occupations, for instance in health and care fields that boys may traditionally reject as 'women's work'. Therefore national education authorities should foster initiatives which support non-traditional career paths for boys are of increasing importance. In cooperation with labour market stakeholders there should be particular efforts to recruit men for female-dominated occupations (conducting social projects which will encourage boys to choose female dominated occupations, endowing special scholarships and internships, involving 'role models' and raising the status of the caring professions through campaigns).
- Men should be encouraged to change their attitudes towards gender equality. This can be done at national level by promoting men who are role models and 'champions' of gender equality, developing awareness raising campaigns on the labour market together with marketing strategies (labour market stakeholders together with national authorities).

### 2.3 Men, gender equality and care

Study results show a remarkable change **in men's** participation in **care** in certain parts of Europe (growing participation in caring for own children). Measured by men's share of care activities at home, the results of the study show that '**men do care**'. While an increasing desire to contribute to family life and childcare becomes obvious and household and family roles experience a period of adaption, large variations in the gender division of paid and unpaid labour appear across European societies. In some regions of Europe (especially in Northern countries), men became more involved between 2005 and 2010 (around 40% of men's share in the weekly unpaid working time in Finland, Denmark and Sweden, 2010). In the same period of time, decreases in men's share were reported especially for some Southern and Eastern countries with low share rates (around 20%).

A similar variation pattern is reported concerning **men's share of household work**. In contemporary Europe the men's share of household work is generally two times higher in the Northern and Western countries than in Southern and Eastern countries.

The study shows that there is not one single causing factor associated with men's larger involvement.

- Despite national and cultural characteristics, men's share of care and housework varies **positively with education, but negatively with income**: Men with higher education are more likely to do a larger share of housework compared to men with lower educations. Men with high incomes are less likely to share equally.
- Furthermore, **men with gender equal norms and beliefs** predominantly participate in housework and caring for children, whereas men with traditional expectations of the division of paid and unpaid work between men and women show low participation rates.
- **Young men** are more likely to share gender-equal norms and expectations, which lead to higher participation in housework and caring for children.
- On top of that, **equal couple arrangements** (equal decision-making, balanced resource distribution) positively influence men's share of housework and caring.

Although men's share of caring and housework is increasing in many countries and can no longer be dismissed, **Europe has not yet achieved a full balancing of men and women's household tasks and family involvement**. A closer look at regions in Europe with higher male participation rates shows patterns that outline the woman as the person being mainly responsible for organising the family, and – somewhat less strongly - the man in a provider role.

The proportion of **dual earner couples with children** (both parents fully employed) varies across Europe, with higher rates in Eastern European countries. This measure is by itself clearly not indicative of the state of gender equality. Although income balance is very important for gender

equality in the household, full-time job balance is not clearly associated with gender equality at the national level. Other factors (politics, culture and family traditions) play their own role. Full time or dual career job balance is associated with gender equality *if* cultural, social and political patriarchy is dismantled.

Clearly, **gender equality policy and welfare regulations** influence the gender division of paid and unpaid work between couples. Family leave regulations, working time regulations, tax systems and institutionalized childcare systems support men's share to care and foster gender equality divisions of labour. If this support is lacking and if in reality the state or the economy still favours unequal family arrangements, gender-equal change will be delayed and progress will be more costly for the individual, for the family and for society as a whole.

**Parental and paternity leave schemes** vary greatly across Europe, and some types of reforms have a more positive effect than others (for example Iceland's **parental leave as a tripartite model**, with the right to a *non-transferable* paid leave period).

The general state of gender equality as well as the **specific family policy** has a large **impact on men's choices** regarding care involvement in the family. Moreover, a policy to involve men in care can be developed, together with a policy to ensure parity or gender balance in economic and political top positions and redress imbalances that contribute not only to the discrimination of women in public life but also to the persistent lack of gender balance in the family sphere.

### Care-related recommendations

- Implementing a coherent system of parental leave: member states should be required to fulfil minimal obligations and to report results on uptake rates (for example, a 20% minimum of parental leave for the father).
- EU policy concerning the role of men in gender equality should avoid pursuing contradictory directions through reforms in different areas (labour, family, education, etc). Coherent policy reforms on equality should give gender equal couples a chance for gender balanced caring.
- The 'nordic' model of parental leave ('father quota') has been adapted and implemented with growing success. With clear strategies and considerations of both national and local specificities it can be adapted across the EU.
- The EU should support and strengthen the development of policies on member state levels that explicitly reward parents of preschool children for a gender-equal balance of care, especially after the first parental leave period:
  - work time reduction (for example 80% over the next two years, provided that both the father and the mother take leave) with wage compensation
  - tax bonus for parents whose gender pay gap narrows
  - extra leave for sick children if parents take it evenly-distributed in the initial year.

## 2.4 Men, gender equality and violence

The majority of all acts of **violence** (physical, psychological and sexual) are **committed by men**. These acts occur everywhere: in public places, workplaces and in intimate relationships. **Men's violence** towards women, children and other men **is rooted in the persisting acceptance of traditional masculinity**, linking men and masculinity to **power, competition** and domination instead of to care and equality.

Because violence is a gendered behaviour this addresses also **gender-based violence** which is a cause and **consequence of the structural inequality and imbalance of power between women and men** in all societies. While women are the most common victims of gender-based violence which occurring in the private sphere (especially *Intimate Relationship Violence*) men are the most common victims in public places (which include streets, public transport, supermarkets, clubs, schools, playing fields etc.) and in the workplace.

Men's violence towards women, children and other men is rooted in the persisting acceptance of traditional masculinity.

## Violence-related recommendations

The active role of men in preventing all forms of violence and in protecting victims is crucial, both at EU and national levels, notably by:

- Encouraging men to commit combating gender-based violence
- Promoting non-violent masculinities by changing gender models
- Fostering, improving and extending work with perpetrators
- Fostering, improving and extending support for male and female victims of gender-based violence by taking into account the specific needs of both female and male victims of gender-based violence
- Raising public awareness and creating better knowledge also about types of violence that are most shameful for the victims (like sexual violence) or considered as being 'normal behaviour' and therefore not perceived as violence (like reciprocal man-to-man physical violence).

## 2.5 Men, gender equality and health

Concerning men's **health**, the most significant results are that in all European countries the **life expectancy of women is higher than that of men**, (76.7 years for men compared to 82.6 years for women) and that large numbers of **men die prematurely**, with more than twice as many deaths a year as women throughout the working ages (15-64 years). Life expectancy is increasing for men as for women, and the gender gap is narrowing in many countries. For all those indicators, age, class and education lead to great variations between men.

Generally speaking, **men's health problems** and premature mortality rates can in large part be seen as **a combination of social inequality** (in terms of class, education level, income etc.) and one-sided socialization patterns towards toughness, paid labour and non-caring. From this perspective, men's health problems have been interpreted as 'costs of masculinity', as opposed to the advantages men gain from current gender relations (higher income, less unpaid work, domination in the decision making bodies etc).

Premature death among the male working age population varies considerably across Europe. Men often have more hazardous occupations and are predominantly affected by **accidents in the workplace**. Moreover, men tend to accept **higher levels of all kinds of risks** as well as risky behaviour, for example smoking, alcohol consumption or high-risk sports.

**Also, the rate of men who commit suicide is much higher than that of women** (standardised death rate per 100 000 inhabitants 2009: 4.4 for women and 16.7 for men), with great differences across Europe: Eastern and Central European countries and Finland show the highest rates.

Compared to women, the **lower rate of seeking medical and psychosocial help by men** is a detrimental factor for men's health. Causes for this phenomenon can be seen in male socialisation (lack of self-care behaviours) as well as in barriers to the accessibility of health services by men due to the structure of these services (for example cost of the services, availability made only during working hours etc).

Reducing socio-economic differences, measures towards redistribution of work and care, and working with youngsters towards establishment of changes in gender identities would improve men's health in the long run. Comprehensive approaches, which simultaneously take men's health, women's health, gender relations and social inequality into account, are needed.

## Health related recommendations

- Increasing knowledge and experience in the field of men's health for example by using male-dominated settings (for example football) in order to engage young male supporters with their physical health.

- Improving men's health by exchanging knowledge and good practice as well as implementing policy initiatives which focus on the role of men in sexual health (f.e. screening programs, educating boys in health issues and sexuality).
- Counteracting insufficient and overly simplistic public communication concerning men's health as well as connecting it to legislative practices such as effective road traffic legislation, smoking bans, more rigorous health and safety measures in the workplace.
- Developing measures to provide men better opportunities to be active carers would benefit not only men's own but also women's and children's health.

## 2.6 Men and gender equality policy

Men are increasingly addressed and mentioned in the process of the further development of gender equality policy. Men's pro-active involvement is strongly connected with the countries' overall advancement in gender equality policies and practices, which leads to a great variety across Europe. This holds true for men's movements as well as men's institutionalised involvement in gender equality policy. Most examples of **pro-feminist men's initiatives** can be found in Northern and in some Central European countries, while in other countries men's involvement in institutionalised policy as well as in men's movements is rather limited: Men are often engaged in women's movements, due to a lack of pro-feminist men's initiatives, or men are organised according to specific **'men's issues'** (like fathers' rights), which contains the risk of counteracting feminist visions of gender equality. Taking these national differences into account is crucial when reflecting on how to strengthen men's involvement in gender equality.

Some international and Europe-wide developments can be observed which might be an opportunity for strengthening men's involvement in gender equality – both on institutional and NGO levels.

- On the one hand, gender mainstreaming seems to have created an initial awareness of the issue of men in gender equality and the establishment of some pathways towards institutional practice.
- On the other hand, the trend of broadening gender equality strategies may strengthen alliances for gender equality and involve more men in actively supporting gender equality.

### Policy-related recommendations

- Development of a balanced and coherent 'men and gender equality' policy embedded in gender equality policy at both national and EU level.
- Support the development and implementation of policy permanent structures on men and gender equality (like committees) or other forms of institutionalised practices (like an advisory board including men's and women's organisations).

## 3 Conclusion

From an overall perspective, men seem to have become more interested in gender equality in most of the countries addressed in the *Study on the Role of Men in Gender Equality* and – at the same time – the issue has increasingly been taken into account in politics in the past decade. Nevertheless, a great variation is to be noted: while Eastern and Southern European countries show a lack of institutionalised involvement of men in gender equality policy, Northern and Central countries are characterised by a more integrated perspective. In these countries a connection between men and gender equality policy and the countries' overall advancement in gender equality policies and practices is visible.

It is obvious that addressing men in gender equality policy is important in order to develop more equal societies. Explicitly naming men as driving forces and target groups in gender equality policies is therefore a first important step. In this perspective, the analysis of possible and already im-

plemented changes (social structures, institutions and practices) as well as persistence relating to the role of men in gender equality are crucial issues. Therefore, the study reflects the multiplicity and complexity of these relations and underlines the most important analysis results.

Based on the study results, some key issues in developing policies are to be taken into account in order to improve the role of men and foster an integrated perspective. Both women and men should benefit from greater gender equality.

- A strong recommendation is to develop and implement gender equality strategies which include a set of measures to support and encourage men to devote more time and priority to the **reconciliation of care, home and paid work**. This is an important and challenging goal for all countries.
- **Gender equality policy programs should be committed to achieving coordinated and sustainable actions to foster the role of men in promoting gender equality in Europe.** The gender mainstreaming approach should be implemented by addressing the needs of and impacts of policies on both women and men and the progress towards equality, and should better integrate the issue of **caring masculinity**.
- To avoid risks which are connected with involving men in gender equality strategies – for example mainly reflecting topics where men seem to be disadvantaged - a **close connection between critical, pro-feminist research on men, masculinities and gender equality with policies** is crucial. The concept and understanding of men and gender equality in government policy should be based on current research results and a balanced approach towards these issues, rejecting a ‘male-discrimination’ perspective.
- While usually much attention is paid to tackling gender differences, it is obvious that in some areas (for example education, health and work) differences between men are bigger than those between women and men. Talking about ‘men’ (as well as ‘women’) as a homogenous group can be misleading. Gender equality strategies which seek to strengthen and improve the role of men in gender equality need to integrate an **intersectional approach**. A perspective on social class, migration and gender is appropriate in order to adapt to gendered practices and patterns. In this respect elaborated and **evidence-based research**, on which gender equality policies can build, is crucial. While for most topics – like work, education, health etc. – sex-differentiated data material is available at European and national levels, a lack of comparable data for intersectional analysis must be emphasised. Class as well as migration indicators have to be provided in order to allow complex in-depth analysis for additional subgroups.