GENDER EQUALITY COMMISSION (GEC)

Activities in the member states on men and boys and gender equality

Received from member states
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AZERBAIJAN

The projects and campaign implemented in Azerbaijan which included activities engaging men are:

1. EU-funded regional programme on addressing gender-biased sex selection and son-preference in Asia and Caucasus:
   a. photo contest reinforcing fathers’ crucial role in empowering girl children and promoting the ideals of responsible fatherhood. The information about this activity gained 10,729 views on social media platforms;
   b. the “Fathers & Daughters” open air festival which took place on 11 March 2018. The festival aimed at enhancing emotional ties of fathers and daughters through day-long entertainment activities, such as a puppet show, a hair styling competition, puzzle solving, face art and theatre. Around 1,000 visitors attended the festival during the day.

2. UNFPA’s collaboration with local faith-based organisations (FBO):
   a. In 2015, UNFPA started collaboration with local religious groups and FBOs in Azerbaijan. The objective of this cooperation was to build trusty relationship with key actors of local religious communities, mainly comprised of male population, to be able to subsequently use their power in conveying to the general public the messages on the value of a girl child and unacceptability of gender-biased sex selection. The organisation managed to establish some good relations with the local authorities operating in the sphere of religious affairs as well as local religious leaders. As a result, 79 mosques and 4,500 believers participated in the community awareness-raising activities.

3. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, UNFPA implemented a celebrity male engagement campaign on social media bringing together about ten local male celebrities who shared their video messages on the importance of men’s close participation in household chores. The campaign recorded thousands of engagements (likes, shares and views) from social media users both on Facebook and Instagram with a total number of about 20k. Some parts of the campaign were echoed on regional and global channels of the UNFPA, as well.

BELGIUM – GOVERNMENT OF FLANDERS

Since 1995 women have been an explicit target group of the Flemish equality policy. It was a policy aimed at reducing the inequalities between women and men (eliminating the social discriminatory mechanisms faced by women). In the past two legislatures, an evolution has taken place, in which we moved from a women’s policy to a gender policy.
Rather than focusing solely on the social position of women, a gender policy is based on the conclusion that gender is a social construct with a major impact on the living conditions of both women and men. By gender we mean the social construction of femininity and masculinity. Indeed, we almost automatically associate with each of those concepts certain feelings, behaviours, even clothes and colours. For example, the concepts of “masculinity” and “femininity” are linked to social expectations that evolve over time. We call these expectations, or social constructs, gender mechanisms. Not only women are disadvantaged by this. Gender mechanisms are limiting to the life and development opportunities of anyone who does not act according to the prevailing gender norms. Just think of the different gender expression of LGBT people. Boys and men are also disadvantaged in several contexts. For example, in education we see how boys are often confronted with peer pressure to stereotypical cocky behaviour and the prejudices of teachers resulting in boys being more often punished than girls for the same behaviour. These and other observations have led to the inclusion of men as an explicit target group within the gender policy.

Gender mechanisms have an effect on private as well as public life. Gender has been incorporated into social structures and institutions and is thereby reinforced and further put into effect. For example, in a society based on caring mothers and career-making fathers, it is not surprising that a gynaecologist only has posters and booklets for the mothers-to-be, with hardly any advice for future fathers. When those norms evolve in society and mothers become more active on the employment market and dads start taking up more of the caring responsibilities, the same gynaecologist room is out of tune with reality and discourages the ongoing evolution towards greater gender equality.

Men too feel the impact of gender mechanisms and want to get rid of harmful gender patterns. Men are now (in the Western world) more than ever participating in the debate on gender equality, and initiatives to recognise and promote the positive contributions of men (and fathers) to society are being brought to the attention.

**Policy initiatives:**
The Flemish website [www.genderklik.be](http://www.genderklik.be) clarifies how these gender mechanisms affect the lives of women and men. This website was developed to raise general awareness about gender. The website is continuously updated with recent articles and contributions and can be used in many ways, including in education.
In the past, the Flemish equal opportunities policy has taken initiatives aimed at men and boys, such as a brochure about fathers and parental leave¹ in 2011, the Gender click for boys² website, the project “Wanted: Feminists”³ in 2016, the campaign about male victims of domestic violence⁴ in 2018 and the financing of a number of projects for and by men in 2018, such as “Vaderklap”⁵ (Dad talks) for the promotion of active and constructive fatherhood and The Man Squad,⁶ an interactive play about being a man in the 20th century.

In 2020, Flanders will finance the implementation of the European Equi-x project⁷ in the Flemish education sector, as a multi-day training on gender equality with a focus on non-violent masculinity.

Flanders will continue its efforts with regards to the promotion of active paternity and eliminating the care gap. Another Flemish ambition is the higher representation of men in the care as well as educational sector.

We would also like to mention a number of initiatives from civil society with regard to men and the male dimension of gender. In 2018, the Men Engage Network Flanders⁸ was founded. The new organisation set up a raising-awareness campaign about masculinity #IkBenDeMan (#IAmTheMan) in co-operation with the women’s movement. In the same year several women’s organisations led a campaign about male victims of violence #OokMannenMakenHetMee (#ItAlsoHappensToMen).

DENMARK

Denmark considers gender equality as a fundamental value in society and a prerequisite for democracy and social cohesion. As a starting point, gender equality efforts have historically focused on women, as they have been predominantly exposed to discrimination and unequal opportunities. However, in recent years, there has been a growing attention towards the involvement of men in gender equality issues. This involvement has targeted both men’s roles as active partners in promoting women’s and girls’ equal opportunities and empowerment, but it has also become clear that men can be beneficiaries of gender equality in their own right.

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² http://www.genderklikvoorjongens.be/
⁴ https://www.absoluut.be/partnergeweld-op-mannen/
⁵ https://www.vaderklap.be/
⁶ https://stichtingnieuwehelden.nl/project/the-man-squad-be/
⁷ http://equixproject.eu/
⁸ https://www.facebook.com/MenEngageVlaanderen/?ref=page_internal
Men are statistically overrepresented at the top of society in, for example, management. They are, however, also overrepresented and at the bottom, for example when it comes to health and social problems. Especially the unskilled and single men are challenged; they die earlier, earn less and have fewer children. Men thus also need special gender equality initiatives, for example, when it comes to health, fathers’ access to paternity leave and the education of boys and young men.

A modern gender equality policy should therefore be aimed at both women and men.

Men and health

Data from Denmark indicate the following conditions:

- In Denmark, there is equal access to health services, but Danish men live on average 3-13 years less than women.
- 28 per cent more men die of the same cancer diseases that women also get.
- 45 per cent of unskilled men are single, and single men live about 7 years less than men in relationships.
- More women than men are diagnosed with depression, while men are more often diagnosed with substance abuse. At the same time, only half of the men who have depression are in treatment for it.
- Men commit suicide three times as often as women. Especially men aged 40-59 years have a high risk of suicide. It is especially factors such as unemployment and loneliness that are associated with suicidal behaviour among 40-59 year old men.
- Men make up more than three quarters of the homeless in Denmark.

Examples of activities:

Municipal project: “Better mental health for men”
The purpose of the project was to train the municipal health workers who work with services, recruitment and activities aimed at men with a focus on promoting mental health. The background was that the municipalities generally express difficulty in recruiting men for relevant services. Studies show a need to work more purposefully with vulnerable men, for example due to loneliness or signs of depression.

Loneliness and dissatisfaction among older men
The aim of the project was to prevent loneliness and unhappiness among the elderly with a special focus on older men. A number of projects have been carried out, including with a focus on: “Older men’s well-being”, “Sports and communities - in vulnerable housing areas” and “Green communities for older men”.

Process regarding prostate cancer treatment
This effort helps to ensure assessment and treatment as well as reduce the over diagnosis of men by creating recommendations regarding rational use of measurement of Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA).

Process regarding penis cancer treatment
Make GPs aware of the symptoms of penis cancer and ensure that assessment and treatment are concentrated in a few places in the country.

Human papillomavirus vaccination for boys
This effort reduces the risk of getting anal cancer and genital warts. The effort is part of the childhood vaccination programme and is recommended at the age of 12.

Men and paternity leave

Data from Denmark indicate the following:

- Men and women are becoming more and more equal in family life. For example, they spend more and more time with their children, and both men and women are increasingly demanding a balance between family and work life.
- In Denmark, parents are jointly entitled to 32 weeks of parental leave with benefits. However, women continue to take the majority of the leave, although many men would have liked to take more leave.
- Men who became fathers in 2018 took an average of 31.5 days off. Mothers took an average of 274 days’ leave.

Examples of activities:

Action Father’s leave
The government’s campaign “Action Father's Leave” was launched in November 2017 in collaboration with a number of large companies, including TDC, Novozymes, Maersk, etc. and a number of professional organisations (including the Danish Trade Union Confederation and Confederation of Danish Employers), which have signed a declaration to support paternity leave. The campaign runs on social media, where both fathers, mothers, grandparents and companies are encouraging fathers take more leave.

Digital post to both parents
A bill will be introduced in the autumn of 2020 to ensure that public authorities, when sending digital posts about a child’s relationship with both parents, send it to both parents who have custody. The bill aims to increase equality between parents in order to have a greater opportunity for equal co-operation concerning a child they have together.
**Father for life**

The project will create good conditions for strong relationships between father and child through various initiatives, including; new concept for joint parent preparation, “Father’s playrooms” throughout Denmark, where fathers can meet in play and talk with other fathers and their children. Additionally, the project have created a new portal where fathers can seek knowledge about birth preparation, birth depression, and the role as father, and where they can find activities for fathers in the local area.

**Men and partner violence**

Data from Denmark indicate the following:

- It is estimated that approx. 38,000 women and approx. 19,000 men is exposed to physical partner violence annually.
- Since 2005, there has been an increase in the number of abused men. For 94 percent, it is a woman who is the perpetrator.
- Within a one-year period, 1.6 per cent of women and 0.8 per cent of men have been exposed to physical partner violence, and 3.9 per cent of women and 1.2 per cent of men have been subjected to psychological partner violence.
- The physical partner violence to which men are exposed is on average less severe than that of women.
- Domestic violence continues to be taboo in our society. Violence against men by their female partner is particularly taboo and stigmatising. Traditionally, they are not taken seriously by the authorities (caseworkers, police, health care, etc.) or in society (media, close relationships, etc.).

**Counselling services for victims of intimate partner violence**

The government allocates permanent funding for NGO’s providing counselling services for men and women victims of intimate partner violence. The national helpline on intimate partner violence provides immediate counselling and support for women and men victims of intimate partner violence and directs them to other relevant services. Calls are anonymous and free of charge.

**Awareness raising campaigns on intimate partner violence**

As part of national actions plans against intimate partner violence the government has run state-wide awareness raising campaigns on psychological intimate partner violence 2017 and 2019 showing both male and female victims and informing about support services for male and female victims.
My Testing Ground – facilitating encounters – fighting prejudice – promoting participation (mein Testgelände 2.0)
Since 2013. Internet www.meintestgelaende.de

The online magazine is a cooperation project of the Federal Association of Work with Boys (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Jungenarbeit) and the Federal Working Committee on Girls’ Policy (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Mädchenpolitik). It is the only website in Germany and the German-speaking countries to publish authentic and unedited posts on gender and equality by youths and so triggers discussions not only among young people, but also with professionals.

The posts are about topics such as what it means to be a girl, a boy or LSBTQI*. Moreover, the young readers address gender roles and inequalities based on sex, colour, religion, disabilities, culture or beauty and body concepts. In addition, they discuss life paths and plans for the future, school and work, youth culture and women’s rights. The aim is to engage both girls and boys in the discussions.

Some 5,000 professional youth workers exchange views on, and experiences of, anything to do with “gender” in a Facebook account connected to the website.

The project is funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth at least until 2022.

Career Change – Men and Women in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

The federal ESF pilot programme “Career Change – Men and Women in ECEC” (Quereinstieg – Männer und Frauen in Kitas) provides support to pilot projects that create or optimise training formats for adults aimed at male and female career changers wanting to become state recognised educators. The training is combined with paid employment in child day-care centres in order to safeguard the trainees’ livelihood.

The previous federal ESF-programme ”MORE Men in ECEC” (2011 – 2013) showed that not only many women but also men, and in particular men over 25, want to change their careers to become educators. Seen on a nationwide basis, however, the number of those having re-qualified has so far been relatively low, since, at the moment, the three-year training period is unpaid and people cannot go without income for such a long period. This is set to change with the new federal ESF-programme.

The aim is to give men and women the opportunity of life-long learning while at the same time earning their livelihood – regardless of their previous employment status. Thus, both employed and unemployed persons are able to individually adapt to a changing labour market by qualifying as a state-recognised educator without having to depend on state funding.
Some of the projects have already started additional courses not funded by the ESF.

**Thematic objective:**
Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning, reducing gender segregation of the labour market.

**Target group:**
Men and women wishing to change their careers regardless of their status 682 participants, of which 236 men (i.e. 34.7%, double the percentage usually found in training courses for educators).

**Implementation period:**
2015 – 2020

**Budget:**
17 million € from the ESF/some 34 million € overall

**Responsible:**
Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

**Website:** [www.chance-quereinstieg.de](http://www.chance-quereinstieg.de)

Supporting Male Victims of Violence

75 per cent of perpetrators of violence are men. However, boys and men are also victims of violence (mainly in the public sphere, but also in the private sphere, in care situations, and in children and youth institutions).

Findings of the German Federal Criminal Police Office show that twenty per cent of known victims of marital violence or violence against a partner are men. Due to persisting gender stereotypes – both internal and external ones – these men quite often do not seek help. It is therefore very likely that the hidden figure of these crimes is significant.

According to official police statistics, sixty per cent of victims of violent crimes are male. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) includes men as victims of domestic violence.

**Measures taken:**

Gender stereotypes often block the view on men and boys as victims of violence.

- The project “**Men and Change**” aims at including boys, men, and fathers in every gender equality policy under a life course perspective. Issues of particular importance are – among others:
  - (self-)care,
  - life planning,
  - career choice,
  - men as perpetrators and victims of violence,
  - reconciliation of working and private life.
Activities include lobbying, research, networking and PR. The realisation of the concept of “caring masculinities” can – in the long run – play an important part in the redistribution of work in society, in reducing the gender pay gap, and in improving men’s health.

Two other projects address the question of violence more directly:

- In order to offer specific counselling for men a training of male counsellors as disseminators of information started in 2019. Existing counselling institutions are to be contacted in order to spread specific counselling for men nation-wide. The two-year project should finally turn into a growing training system. It is to be monitored and standards will be developed.

- A national co-ordination centre for the protection of men against violence is being created in the course of a two-year project. Its aims are:
  - Sensitisation of the public to violence against men,
  - creation of shelters for male victims and their children,
  - creation of low-threshold counselling for men,
  - coordination and networking on a national level.

Various institutions will be implied on the basis of already existing recommended procedures. Telephone helplines and online counselling in the various Länder will be promoted.

Further Requirements

Reliable data on what kind of help and support boys and men need when they have become victims of violence.

Male victims need specific professional support.

First findings: there are too few places where male victims of sexual violence or violence against a partner find understanding and support. Existing structures have to be highlighted.

Next Steps

A dossier on gender equality policy for boys and men is being prepared for publication in 2020. Main topics are men’s specific problems and needs, a list of relevant current measures and existing support institutions, and a look ahead with recommendations.

Research: In 2004 the Federal Government published a broad study on violence against women as well as a pilot study on violence against men. No follow-up study has so far been done.

Regular national surveys on violence against both women and men are being planned.
Beside the well-known projects Boys’ Day, Girls’ Day, and meinTestgelaende 2.0, the Federal initiative “No clichés” (Klischeefrei), which was set up in 2016, aims to establish non-clichéd vocational and study choices, free from restrictive gender stereotypes. To all those involved in the vocational choice process (early childhood education, schools, universities, companies, institutions, vocational guidance centres, and parents) it offers wide-ranging support enabling them to help girls and boys make vocational choices that match their strengths – and not gender stereotypes.

The service centre advises and networks all those involved and manages the initiative’s website (www.klischee-frei.de). It provides practice-oriented material, background information and success stories on gender-sensitive vocational guidance. A growing number of partner organisations (258, as of July 2020) is joining the initiative and have committed themselves to providing non-clichéd vocational guidance within and outside their institutions.

The patron of the initiative is Elke Büdenbender, spouse of Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

Boys’ Day – Future Prospects for Boys

Held annually since 2011
Internet: www.boys-day.de

Boys’ Day – Future Prospects for Boys is to motivate boys and young men aged 10 to 17 to opt for training or studies in fields traditionally not taken into consideration by men, in fields such as nursing, care, education or the service sector. In addition, they can take part in a variety of workshops with regard to social skills and life planning unhampered by traditional gender roles.

Just as Girls’ Day, it is usually held on the fourth Thursday in April.

Since 2011, almost 300,000 boys have taken part.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Boys’ Day had to be cancelled in 2020, but will be continued in 2021.

The project also provides a network for professionals working with boys.

In 2018, 94 per cent of boys participating enjoyed the event and two in three boys said to have looked into quite an interesting career area. Some 80 per cent of the institutions involved marked Boys’ Day ‘good’ or ‘very good’.
SWITZERLAND

Switzerland supports the initiative to integrate the theme "men, boys and equality" into the work of the GEC and presents several Swiss activities in this regard.

First of all, the "Geschlechterdialog", a tripartite discussion platform between the Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE) and women's and men's umbrella organisations, which allows for the best possible consideration of requests from all quarters and the integration of men and boys in equality issues.

In addition, the FOGE supports projects to promote gender equality in working life with financial assistance. Several of these projects are specifically aimed at men. For example, they aim to improve the reconciliation of work and family life, or to encourage men in professions and branches that are atypical for their gender in order to move closer to equal representation of women and men in these professions and branches.