

# **FOCUS**

## Fostering Caring Masculinities

Documentation  
of the German Gender Expert Study

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*January 2007*

Supported by the European Community: Programme relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality

Co-funded by The Hans-Böckler-Foundation



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# 1. Introduction

According to FOCUS basic aims and ideas, the question of work and care challenges traditional gender roles, “which opens space for rethinking the concepts of men, women, femininity and masculinity. Moreover it changes the perception of caring as a gender-related burden and an undervalued activity in society.” (FOCUS Reports, Introduction)

This has been proved by new orientations in women’s and men’s lives, and it is related to upheavals and breakups in labour markets and the demography of western societies. “It is neither desirable (from a gender equality perspective) nor probable (from the perspective of ongoing changes) that care maintains the traditional female bias.” (ibd.) But still hegemonic gender constructions are in effect, and still there is a long way to go. Not only different publications point out that care is still gendered and traditional stereotypes still work (cf. Holter 2003, Puchert et al. 2005). Moreover, FOCUS organisation surveys, beyond good news showing growing preparedness of companies to enable balance, point out that neither gender equality nor balance and reconciliation are top aims of companies. They seem to be sideways, linked to human resource (HR) concepts for modernisation, or ethical commitments, but they seem to rise and fall with companies’ core interests.

To raise the attractiveness of the topic, we wanted to see if a “win-win principle” can be implemented to open companies for caring masculinities, balance and reconciliation. One way to look at it was the survey in organisations to get the voices “from within”.

The other option we chose in a German extra study was to collect the experiences of social researchers, trainers and gender experts from their work within organisations. Due to the fact, that *genderWerk* is active in gender trainings and gender mainstreaming processes, our interest was to bring together the creativity of expert colleagues to collect ideas to improve the FOCUS process.

Therefore, between May and August 2006, *Dissens* and *genderWerk* carried out expert interviews and one workshop, gathering trainers and consultants. Also, we presented and discussed FOCUS on other stages, at the Berlin “Forum of Men in Theory and Practise of Gender Relations” and with another European Project, “Romann”<sup>1</sup>. We researched practice projects in the field of family and gender policy or men’s/father’s counselling, which could be potential partners for further cooperation. Also, we began to develop a

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<sup>1</sup> *RoMann* – The role of men concerning reconciliation of professional and private life; a project covering smaller and medium sized industrial companies.

methodological approach to train men on work-life balance. The results of all those steps are documented in this documentation.

From the results of the FOCUS company studies, requirements in consulting become quite clear:

In general we see the prevalence of disparities in internal gender relations, hierarchies and work-life balance, and of overwork in organisations, first of all in the higher management. These issues can only be targeted with changes in the organisational cultures, which obviously calls for controlled change processes. E.g., the Icelandic report emphasizes the requirement to raise men's options for family care also by internal gender action plans. Also, links between gender equality, care and diversity have to be discussed more intensively. One of the central issues is to discuss how to shift care & parental leave from a career malus into a career bonus.

The gender experts are described by the following list:

Fields of the experts: Freelancing organisation consulting, gender training, diversity management, politics/political foundations, youth counselling offices, social research, and media.

Topics of work: Gender and organisations, vocational trainings, paternity and reconciliation, emotional and health problems/crises, life courses, vitality and quest for values, gender relations, body and sexuality, education, labour and gender.

Experts' target groups: Men's groups, individual men, youngsters, organisations, managers & decision makers, employees, gender representatives, trade unions & works council representatives, fathers, and help-seeking men in general.

Besides mapping and including experts' contributions into FOCUS project, we also wanted to implement the project's aims into the public agenda in Germany. The time seemed right, since The Federal Ministry for Family and Seniors, Women and Youngsters (BMFSFJ) introduced the new law on parental allowance, including fathers also. (See FOCUS-German National Report).

The results of these efforts are documented under "6. Dissemination".

## 2. What we understand by “care“

In our discussion we followed the idea to strengthen the role of “care“ as an overall objective for the research approach and the basis for a needs analysis. We follow the idea of an “ethics of care” as an approach in social policy and as an important dimension of everyday life. Our assumption is, that both are situated in the tense area of dichotomised gender relationships. Gender is historically, economically and culturally constructed: by the bourgeois model of gender roles and spheres, and due to the demands of a capitalist economy. Production and reproduction are divided and mutually related to one sex group. “Care” is structurally marked, as typically female - unpaid, or low paid, invisible, and not very much acknowledged in the dichotomy of productive and reproductive activities. This dichotomy in our opinion influences the social structures (position in the labour market), organisations (e.g. gender bias in care organisations/institutions), and individuals (e.g. habits based on the performance of self images and images of others).

We differentiate the following types and spheres of private care:

- Care for others:  
children, disabled and ill persons (relatives or others), seniors (like parents)
- Networks of mutual care:  
love and friendship – emotional reproduction and networks of all-day care.  
family, friends, relatives, villages, communities ...
- Self-care:  
physical and emotional well-being, movement, nourishment ...

We learned that care is mostly restricted to “care for others”, and even more narrowed to “care for children” in recent discourses. However, we regard it as necessary to integrate interdepending types and spheres. A good kind of care for others is only possible with a good share of self-care. Not only because of “individual sustainability“, health (a top topic particularly for men) and emotional well-being, but also because of the quality of care (and the relation of care-givers and care-receivers) itself.

FOCUS narrowed the practical concept of care mostly, but not only, to family care, e.g. care for children. This was due to pragmatic reasons: We had to manage the whole project, leading to practical results. We stressed gender balance in care, and we wanted to contribute to gender equality. This would mean to break up the traditional dichotomy between work and family care, so we focussed on organisations to practically contribute to an improved work-life balance – a premise of work-family reconciliation.

The study on gender experts, however, gave an option to widen again the perspective on gender. Especially, we wanted to look for intersections like care for others, organisational care, and self care, and its relation to masculinity.

This also means that we must not restrict the term “care” to “what a mother does”, and by this take a very gendered perspective on it. We received examples of typical male patterns of care connected to labour and the breadwinner model – care at work, communication facing colleagues, humour, respect and support, etc. That does not mean there would be nothing left to change. Tasks and resources are still distributed unequally. But the perspective is, that there are already caring masculinities in various forms – they have to be fostered, and maybe modified. But it is not necessary to invent them from the scratch.

### 3. Aspects of men's work-life balance – Collecting experts' experience

On June 29, 2006, *genderWerk* and *Dissens* facilitated a workshop aiming on an experts' exchange about FOCUS issues.<sup>2</sup> In summer 2006 interviews were conducted with single experts who could not attend.

The following experts contributed their expertise: Andreas Goosses (*pro familia*, Berlin), (Manfred Grassert (*Balance*, Berlin), Eberhard Schäfer (*Mannege*, Berlin), Christian Raschke (*Vielfalt gestalten – Managing diversity*, Trebnitz and Berlin), Michael Gumbel (*sujet*, Hamburg), Andreas Borter (“Fathers' Net“, Burgdorf/Switzerland), Alexander Bentheim (*Switchboard*-Magazine, Hamburg), Hans-Georg Nelles (*Fathers & Career*, Düsseldorf and Moers). The following paragraphs collect topics under discussions and give hints for the practical work on the level of organisational consulting and individual coaching or counselling.

#### Self reflections:

- A mutual interview of the participants showed different life courses and situations: Active fathers who learned (or currently learn) to balance, over-workers with long night-shifts, men who went through serious health-crises to find a balance (and the right job). All in all, the mix is similar to samples in FOCUS workplace research, and it sometimes reminded us of the *Work Changes Gender* project 2001-04. The results show: Work-life balance is not only a problem “of others” but a task each individual has to cope with. Thus, also consultants, researchers, and gender trainers are subject to balance spheres and areas. Work-life balance is a dazzling term. Being under discussion for more than two decades now, it is not quite clear if the discourse helped to come to positive results in reality. So some of the participants had some doubts about the basic question: If somebody loves to work 60 hours per week or more – what is wrong with that? And isn't it more a question of what it means to lead a “good life”?
- Does the term “work-life balance” reflect our own – personal and professional – experiences adequately? Some experts raised the argument that the dichotomous split between the spheres “work” and “life” is wrong: Work is an important part of life (either in the form of labour or in a different way), and also life plays a role in every aspect of working activity. Others argued that in a

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<sup>2</sup> “Männer>Gender>>Work Life Balance” (“Men>Gender>>Work-life Balance”)

capitalist society, labour is never voluntary or self-determined. Thus, there exists a split between “making a living” and life itself.

- From the personal experience of most of the experts work, gender, and the body are closely linked – and they are also linked to the problem of self-care. The topic of health in the context of work was discussed intensively. Sceptical arguments came across: health is, up to a certain point of no return, something which is “cut off” by men while catching the career train. And it seems to be simple to be cut off while over-working. But also, the quality of the relationship to the partner is important: it can save from overwork.

### **Opening organisations:**

- Work-life balance includes the levels of the individual, the organisation and the whole society. The German FOCUS survey showed that often companies tend to “individualize” the problem of balance and reconciliation. As we saw, training on work-life balance sometimes only focuses on individual coping with work constraints or on stress management. Also, fathers mostly relied on either traditional gender structures (the wife going on part-time), the wider family (own parents or parents-in-law) or alternative social structures to solve parental situations and problems. But still there is normally a lack both on organisational and social levels to help men playing an active role in the family.
- “Mothers, in their parental role, are taken more serious than fathers”, one expert reported his impressions both from the public discourse and his experience related to organisations. It is not recognized that fathers, due to their experiences, are sometimes more able to work under pressure than men without children. This seems to be a result of the “separation of care” - even if care competencies pay, they are ignored. Care is not regarded as a 'performance', and where masculine care patterns are visible, they are either not acknowledged, or not seen as care at all.
- To raise organisations' awareness of men, care and reconciliation, the role of decision makers is crucial (cf. Gärtner 2005), e.g. their own experience as fathers (either positive or negative ones), their physical or emotional difficulties etc. Consultants reported that individual coaching did not only change managers' practices towards their own life, but also their attitudes towards how things can be arranged in organisations.
- Sometimes, a consultant reported, the wording in the process of consulting can have an effect: “Call family work a 'project', and the manager will probably be interested, because that is according to the way he is used to think.” And experts working with manager men's groups have avoided to call them men's groups. “The image is more like an alternative, 'softy' thing, and managers



would not take that serious.” The content and the style of work, however, were in no way different from those of other men's groups facilitated by the same experts. This shows that cultural or individual aspects can be of high importance in how to “sell” change processes towards care in an acceptable way. It would be an interesting discussion whether this is a matter of “one step after another” or a pattern of hegemonic masculinities, which resist deeper changes.

- *genderWerk* trainers referred to lectures where participants told them: “When I try to talk about gender in my organisation, people shut their ears.” Gender is often devaluated: “When I offer a training for organisational development instead, and use similar topics and methods, I get more out of it.” The question remains, whether changes in gender relations can be achieved by “de-gendered labels”.
- All in all, the experiences of working with men in gender trainings was positive. As an icebreaker – and taking into account that gender is often seen as a non-male issue – the strategy of “allowing the unallowed” could be useful. “Gender blasphemy,” one expert called the method to release the “burden” from the charged and often polarized topic of gender relations. That means to speak out controversies and contradictions on the whole discussion on gender, and also taboos. Whatever method one uses – sometimes only for the reason of creating an open atmosphere: there is often the chance to produce helpful material for debate at the same time. The mixture of personal and professional aspects is but a challenge in in-house gender trainings. It can improve workplace atmosphere and help solving problems, but the barrier can be high as well.
- “Obviously, most attractive are solutions which pay,” a consultant summarized organisations' interests. This could be applicable here, according to a survey of German-Suisse economy research institute Prognos (2003). Drawing upon “realistic” and rather “conservative” assumptions and exploring ten German companies, the survey lists five central effects of family friendly policies:
  - Reduction of staff turnover and a rise in the parental leave returnee quota,
  - Shortened absence periods directly following the end of maternity benefits,
  - Reduction of missed work and sick leave,
  - Improved personnel marketing,
  - Improved company image.

But even if we see these win-win options, it is still necessary to work with them without exaggerating the possibilities.

### **Dangers:**

- Work-life balance and pro-reconciliation policies are often presented as a recipe for overall success: „Reconciliation policies help create a flexible economy, while improving the quality of women's and men's lives. They help people enter and stay on the labour market, using the full potential of the workforce and must be equally available to women and men. Flexible working arrangements boost productivity, enhance employee satisfaction and employer's reputation,” the European Commission states (2006, p.5). But it is quite clear, that even if labour market participation of women and the interest of fathers in families grew, the transition to a more flexible German labour market in recent years was accompanied by a decline of security, a growing precariousness of work relations, and a mass unemployment.
- Unfortunately, the pressure of the “labour society without labour” increasingly leads to competitive professional patterns. It might be helpful to already teach adolescents how to cope with changing labour markets in a way as self-determined as possible: “ Boys and men must learn not to simply knuckle down to the pressure of competition, but to look off the beaten tracks where they really want to go.”

### **Perspectives:**

- German sociologists Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, thinking of men and gender equality, once spoke about “men's verbal open-mindedness with rigid behaviour at the same time” (Beck/Beck-Gernsheim 1990, p.31). Is that still true? Research showed that conventional stereotypes of masculinity and their reproduction in organisations (career models, working time models, organisational culture) are an obstacle towards care-oriented masculinities and gender equality. As men's counsellors stated, self-care still is a male taboo or something unknown. After all, men still fear not to be regarded as a “real man”. In gender trainings, last but not least men open up, if they find protected spaces. Talking about problems is important. According to the practical experts on men, this is, beyond the topics of health and fatherhood, a door-opener towards reflection and change, possibly leading to increased self-care.
- According to counsellors, the big issues men raise as topics are these:
  - work and leisure, work-life balance;
  - marriage, love and relationship
  - family, paternity, contact with children
 Topic centres in organisations, towns and regions should be implemented and aware of these topics.
- “It is still the women who do the final cleaning, mostly with children,” one participant reported. This might possibly, but not necessarily mean that men “do not want”. But it might also be a problem of inter-relational expectations:

Men sometimes simply “dare not” do particular caring work, e.g. with children, because they do not feel able. Men might need more encouragement that they do alright if they do.

## 4. Examples of other German institutions and projects relevant for FOCUS

Different projects in the context of gender and family policy or related to fathers' counselling are quite closely related to FOCUS topics. Some of these projects are already contacted or involved to promote FOCUS aims (like The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, *GenderKompetenzZentrum*, trade unions). Others are suitable to be included in national projects on men/fathers, care and gender equality (Mannegge, *vaeter-nrw.de*, *VEND e.V.*). We will introduce them briefly without restricting our cooperation to only the projects mentioned here.

### Trade unions

Unions affiliated to the Confederation of German Trade Unions (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB*) have led campaigns on equal opportunities for men and women, and have drawn up a checklist for Collective Agreements that avoid gender-specific discrimination as a code of practice for collective-agreement negotiations. In addition, in July 2003, *DGB*-affiliated unions started an action programme on Equal Opportunities in the Firm. (<http://www.chancengleich.dgb.de/materialien>). Also in July 2003, the action program Equal Opportunities in Enterprises (*Chancengleichheit im Betrieb*) was launched by the *DGB* and its member unions in order to help improving gender equality (<http://www.einblick.dgb.de/archiv/0311/tx031103.htm>). Furthermore, the *DGB* initiated and accompanied the development of a manual for equal opportunities for works councils.

The trade union for services, *Ver.di*, is very committed to the reconciliation especially of fathers. As a pioneer's work, the application-oriented research project "Also Men have a Reconciliation Problem" was conducted in 2003/04.

### Professional Association for GenderDiversity

Gender trainers and consultants affiliated for professional and political exchange. Gender is regarded as socially and historically constructed, and thus changeable. *Gender Diversity* contains differentiations related to age, ethnicity/race, (physical) abilities, sexual orientation or class.

The aim of the association is gender democracy, which means to support equal participation in decisions and equal access to resources on all levels and in all areas.

### Fathers' Internet Portals

The Federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) offers an internet portal in giving relevant information for fathers and about paternity:

<http://www.vaeter-nrw.de/?contr=category&categoryID=94>

It is provided by the Ministry for Generations, Family, Women and Integration (NRW) to “close the gap of provision of father-specific information (...)”. The portal presents topic centres and options for counselling, agenda for events, meetings and lectures around paternity, further reading and guides, and a database for projects. Direct information is linked to these topics: birth, fathers and kids, relationship, fathers and labour, social networks.

Similar to the NRW portal, the office for social affairs and family of the City state of Hamburg helped to install a similar one: <http://www.vaeter.de>.

Principles and structure are more or less the same as in NRW. In the Federal state of Lower Saxony the relevant webpage is [www.vaeter-netz.de](http://www.vaeter-netz.de).

These internet platforms are not only a good opportunity to disseminate FOCUS results, but also good cooperation partners to spread the aims and ideas of FOCUS. Also, they can work as network media to implement projects related to caring masculinities in follow-up projects.

### **Mannege – Berlin Men's and Fathers' Counselling Centre**

The non-profit information and counselling centre *Mannege e.V.* ([www.mannege.de](http://www.mannege.de)) was founded in 1987. It is run by a team of men committed to professional men's work.

The main target group are fathers. *Mannege* wants to support men to develop and maintain good and intensive relationships with their children. It enables the exchange about fathers' roles, living with children, families and relationship. Also, men get support in situations of breakup and/or divorce.

### **VEND – Fathers' Expert Network Germany**

*VEND* is a federal network fostering fathers' competencies in bringing up children and gender equality. It supports organisations and experts to campaign for active fatherhood and to widen the scope for fathers to reconcile work, family and leisure time. *VEND* wants to be an „active fathers' lobby“ for politics, ministries, authorities and professional associations, linking professional institutions and experts from the fields of education, consulting, research, policy and business. It is also an agency for lecturers on father specific topics and an experts' service.

### **Work and Family Audit**

At [www.beruf-und-familie.de](http://www.beruf-und-familie.de), the Hertie foundation hosts the **work and family audit**, „an instrument for the management to promote family-oriented personnel policy in which not only the measures already implemented are assessed but also the development potential of the individual company is shown and further-reaching aims and objectives are determined.“ (Federal Ministry for Families et al., <http://www.bmfsfj.de/Publikationen/women-in-germany/links.html>)

## **GenderKompetenzZentrum (Gender Expertise Centre)**

„is an application-oriented research institution at the Humboldt-University of Berlin for supporting public administrative institutions in implementing the Gender Mainstreaming (GM) strategy. It was founded in October 2003 as an externally funded project within the Centre for Transdisciplinary Gender Studies (ZtG). It is financed by the Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.“ (<http://www.genderkompetenz.info/eng/>). The centre works with actors from the fields of politics, public administration, industry, associations, science and academia, and with consultants. Gender Mainstreaming is one of its core issues.

## **Actions of the Federal Government**

The *Alliance for the Family*, coordinates initiatives for enhancing the balance of family and working life. Strong partners from the industry, associations and policy-making have agreed to lobby for a pro-family world of work and corporate culture.

The actual transfer of these policies into greater family-friendliness must take place first and foremost on site. Therefore, enterprises, communities, trade associations, organisations, churches and welfare associations are committed in the large-scale initiative “Local alliances for the family”, launched in early 2004 throughout Germany. The local partners of the alliance push for improvements of the living conditions in cities and communities, because family-friendliness stops the exodus of young families and workers with purchasing power and raises a community’s attractiveness as an industrial location. ([www.bmfsfj.de/doku/ministerkonferenz/download/pdf\\_Ruerup.pdf](http://www.bmfsfj.de/doku/ministerkonferenz/download/pdf_Ruerup.pdf))

This is a current campaign poster for active paternity by the German Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth (Based on a word play: “Active fathers get children” and “Children get active fathers”):





Bundesministerium  
für Familie, Senioren, Frauen  
und Jugend



# KINDER KRIEGEN aktive Väter



## Mehr Väter übernehmen Erziehungsverantwortung in der Familie.

Kinder brauchen von Anfang an den ganzen Einsatz ihrer Eltern. Gerade die Väter wollen sich heute stärker in der Erziehung engagieren als früher. Mit den neuen Regelungen zu Elternzeit und Elterngeld schafft die Bundesregierung darum gerechte Grundlagen dafür, dass sich berufstätige Eltern in Zukunft Arbeit und Erziehung besser teilen können.

[www.deutschland-wird-kinderfreundlich.de](http://www.deutschland-wird-kinderfreundlich.de)



Deutschland wird kinderfreundlich



## 5. “All as right as a trivet<sup>3</sup>?!”

### Workshop on work-life balance for men

In order to achieve a sustainable change in the field of care, men have to take a thorough look at their personal work-life balance. Care for others in the long run does not work, if it is just an additional burden on top of the work load. But as results of the FOCUS workplace studies as well as our study show, exactly this do many men tend to take on, thereby reproducing the dominant masculine overwork culture or other form of strain through work. This behaviour is often fostered by colleagues and superiors; it is in fact a well accepted societal standard. Burn out, serious illness, or alienation from family or oneself are common consequences. Health and work-life balance have been core topics for our experts in working with men.

For men this is a tricky issue, because it is not very common to publicly claim self-care for oneself. Thus on the one hand men have vital needs in this respect and in fact need support to encounter this, on the other hand it is a taboo to seek help and support. We find the same phenomenon in the general area of public health regarding men.

From our results and from our own experience in working with men we decided to create a workshop especially on work-life balance for men, addressing the fact that it is an important, but difficult issue for them. It is designed as a two-day workshop, with a follow-up possible after some time. It can be offered openly or within organisations. For the issue of work-life balance is vital not only for the individual person, but also for an organisation which employs people. Supporting their employees to keep their lives in good balance is a modern and sustainable measure in human resources.

On the final FOCUS conference in Girona *genderWerk* offered a taste of the workshop by introducing the concept to the conference participants and going through parts of it together. We document the structure and concept here, together with a short report from the conference workshop.

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<sup>3</sup> A trivet is a device with three legs used in chemistry. It is always in balance.

## All as Right as a Trivet?

### Work-Life Balance for Men A Two-Day Workshop



20.-21. January 2007  
at Schlüßhof, Lychen  
near Berlin / Germany



#### The Workshop

Do you know the feeling that you don't quite meet your different requirements in life any more? The job is demanding, there is your partner or family with their needs, and you have your own standards as well. You are under permanent stress and you sort of like the fact, that you still can handle it. But at the same time this overall tension does not feel too good. You still function, but there is little space for leisure, self-care and new ideas to arise.

Looks like it needs a time-out before you run into burn-out. In this workshop you will have the opportunity for it. We aim at creating a common space, where you can look at your current situation in a relaxed and non-demanding way. You can allow yourself to take a break, reflect on your way in life and gather new energy. No need for a change, unless you want it.

Maybe there are wishes and visions for your future – let's look at them and give them space. Value what you already have, and explore the potential for more. Get excited and make plans, without having to prove yourself to others.

Enjoy yourself in rest and in activity. Indulge in beautiful nature. Be inspired and supported by other men. Take home your own sense of balance.

#### The Venue

Sometimes you need to get away from it all to look at your life from a distance. Changing perspectives helps a lot, mentally as well physically. Especially for working on work-life balance, we find it essential to be in a pleasant and open atmosphere.

For our workshop we therefore chose the *Schlüßhof*, about 100 km north of Berlin. It is beautifully situated in the midst of lakes and forest, allowing all sorts of outdoor activities like walking, canoeing, swimming, (or ice-skating in winter). Seminar house and rooms are located in a quiet and peaceful park, perfect for a work retreat which needs some free space for new inspiration. The hosts are very welcoming people and they serve healthy and nourishing food.

It is possible and recommended to arrive already on Friday night.

Check it out yourself at [www.schluesshof.de](http://www.schluesshof.de)

In the Girona workshop we started with a short, easy bodywork exercise (standing in balance with closed eyes and perceive the body sensations), providing a warm-up as well as an opportunity for the participants to introduce themselves. We gave a brief theoretical input to frame the workshop and its idea within the gender field and to explain the background of its specialisation on men. After that we introduced the program of the actual two-day concept.

## **Workshop program**

### DAY 1

- Introduction
- Meeting Each Other
  - Find an easily accessible way of getting in touch*
- „Me, My Work, and My Life“
  - Life now – Map
    - (see below)*
  - Body Awareness & Health
    - What might the body tell us?*
  - Structural Conditions
    - Recognize them, see the limits, but do not take them for granted.*
- Personal History
  - How Did I Get Here?
    - Key Steps, Traps and Milestones on the Road
      - Acknowledge what has been done and achieved. See difficulties.*
      - Realize that life is changeable.*
- Resources
  - Evident Skills & Hidden Potential
    - What can I rely on when it gets tight and tense?*
    - What more do I have to explore?*
- Needs, Wishes, and Change
  - What Needs to Be Balanced?
    - From a current perspective, what comes up as a predominant issue at the moment?*

### DAY 2

- Men and Self-Care
  - Self-Exploration, Input, Discussion  
*How do I experience care / self-care? How does it interweave with my social background? Is there a broader dimension to it?*
- My Vision
  - Journey Towards a Balanced Life  
*Guided Imaginary Journey to access one's individual intuition and inner knowledge about where and how to go. Individual documentation and exchange with partners.*
- Tools & Strategies
  - What Inhibits Me, What Supports Me?  
*Are there obstacles on my journey? How can they be addressed? How to make best use of my skills and resources, and how to use support structures.*
  - Structural Conditions  
*Taking up the issue from day 1, we get clearer about those conditions and utilise tools and strategies in relation to them.*
- My Aims
  - Defining Achievable Goals  
*The work done above flows into creating concrete individual aims in the field of work-life balance, including clarity about how to achieve them.*
- Personal Action Plan
  - Individual Design  
*Every participant develops a plan on tackling and reaching his goal(s) short term and mid term.*
  - Men's Mutual Coaching and „Contracts“  
*Participants support each other to make each plan concrete, realistic and practical. Mutual controlling agreements for the near future are a great backing.*

(Warm-up's, bodywork exercises, and group games accompany and foster the whole process.)

## **Exercises and Feedback**

On a practical level we introduced two exercises in Girona. We started with the “Life-now Map” from the first day. Each participant is equipped with a sheet of paper (preferably A-3-format) and some colourful pens to write and/or draw. They are asked to take some time to reflect their lives *at present*. At this stage

it is not about a biographical view back, but only a snapshot about their lives now. It is important, however, to include every area of life in the contemplation. The different areas should then be mapped on the paper in an appropriate way – we suggest, to use circles, which can be arranged in a way to also show connections between them. Their size should demonstrate the importance and weight in life at present for the individual, including the time spent in the respective area. The circles can be filled with everything which characterises them: persons involved, joyful aspects, difficulties, and such. After this individual exploration the participants come together in pairs to show their drawings and exchange. Of course everyone can choose, how far to go in sharing intimate details – no obligation to expose oneself. Time allowing there can also follow a short sharing in the whole group.

The second exercise followed straight after, which meant to jump to the end of day 1. Very briefly the participants were asked to take into consideration their life state just explored, and from there think (or feel) about the balance in their lives and about aspects, which possibly call for a change. This is a more spontaneous approach, avoiding to go too much into pondering on problems, but rather listen to the guts. If any needs for change come up, at least one should be written on a card, giving us something to take home and remind ourselves later on. The card contents were then shared with the whole group.

The participant's feedback was mostly positive. They enjoyed the time; most of them had the wish to continue for another hour or so. The group setting was reported to be helpful and empowering, some found it easier to share the personal issues with strangers. The somewhat non-academic approach with colours, cards, drawing etc., and the relaxed setting was experienced as a great support by some. The importance of a follow-up workshop was stressed, as was the difficulty to find enough participants for that kind of workshop amongst men. The marketing would have to be very smart and target group specific.

## **Target Groups**

A training in the field of work-life balance aims at individual persons, but has advantages for organisations as well. Thus it can be offered also to companies for their employees and/or management, involving slightly different marketing accentuations as follows:

### Target group employees

Analysis of the individual situation of work and private life.

Aspects: time/distress, health, private situation (relationship, children, others), general aims in life, work satisfaction.

Where are difficulties and challenges? Which relation do they have to the individual life situation and work situation? What would the individual person like to change? Which consequences would that have for the organisation? Resistances to face, strategies?

Aims: Higher life satisfaction, balance of work life and other areas of life, improvement of life situation (health, relationship, family), better time management, higher self-determination.

#### Target group organisation

- Analysis of individual work-life balances and the corresponding working structures.
- Aspects: work situation, working climate, communication difficulties, problems like sick leave or mobbing.
- Advantages of work-life balance for the organisation. Which structural changes are necessary? How to implement them? Problems to face, strategies.
- Aims: better working climate and communication, higher motivation of employees, less sick leave.

## 6. Dissemination

This report aims to document material and information on organisational change related to caring masculinities, and to develop follow-up projects in Germany. One effect welcome would be to exchange relevant experiences on consulting, counselling and organisational change on a European level.

### **Documentation and dissemination of project results (November 06 – January 07)**

- Articles from project members in German publications:
  - *Schriften zur Geschlechterdemokratie* (Scripture on Gender Democracy, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Berlin), # 15, Jonas Gieseke und Marc Gärtner: “Don’t hurry, be happy?” Work Life Balance als (geschlechter)gerechte Neuaufteilung von Arbeit und Leben.
  - *Switchboard* # 180, 1/2007 (Magazine on men and boys education, Hamburg), Marc Gärtner: Männer, Gender, Work-Life Balance.
- Articles about FOCUS in German magazines and newspapers:
  - 18.12.2006, Das Parlament 51/52: “Unterstützung für Papa- und Mamamonate” („Support for Daddies’ and Mummies’ Leaves“).
  - 13.11.2006, Südwest-Presse: „Anreize für die Papamonate“ (“Sweeteners for Daddies’ Leaves“).
  - *Switchboard* #179, 12/2006: „Pioniere der Väterzeit“ (“Pioneers for Father’s Leave“).
  - Deutsche Polizei 01/2007: „Pioniere der Väterzeit“ (“Pioneers for Father’s Leave“).
- Presentations and conferences
  - Public Forum of Peace Institute, Ljubljana, 14.06.2006, presentation of the project and findings of national case studies.
  - Men’s Forum/Forum Männer in Theorie und Praxis der Geschlechterverhältnisse, Conference on “Men’s Politics“, 30.06./01.07.2006, presentation: “Don’t hurry, be happy?” Work Life Balance als (geschlechter)gerechte Neuaufteilung von Arbeit und Leben.

- Project meeting of the EU-project “RoMann” on men, gender equality and organisations, 04.07.2006, presentation: “Männer>Gender>>Work Life Balance” (Men/Gender/Work-life Balance).
- 07.07.2006, Berlin: Federal Women’s council of The Green Party (Bundesfrauenreferat, BÜNDNIS 90 / DIE GRÜNEN): Round table talk „Women and Working Time“; Input Klaus Schwerma, Dissens e.V..  
Topics: Do men want to work less? What do they require? Would they take the risk of being “dependent”? How can caring masculinities be promoted?
- 15.12.2006, Berlin: Conference “Männerperspektiven in der Gleichstellungspolitik – Fragestellungen und Handlungsmöglichkeiten“ (“Men’s perspectives in gender equality – questions and opportunities for action“). Policy consulting on men, care and equality, cooperation with The Federal Ministry for Family and Seniors, Women and Youngsters (BMFSFJ)



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