



# The Involvement of Men in Gender Equality Initiatives in the European Union

**Study  
report**



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*'In order to improve the status of women and promote gender equality, more attention should be paid to how men are involved in the achievement of equality, as well as to the positive impact of gender equality for men and for the well-being of the society as a whole.'*\*

This report is based on a study financed by, and prepared for the use of, the European Institute for Gender Equality. The background study was prepared by Men for Gender Equality (Sweden), a member of MenEngage.

MenEngage (<http://www.menengage.org>) is a global alliance of NGOs and UN agencies that seeks to engage boys and men to achieve gender equality. Steering Committee members include Promundo (Co-Chair, Brazil), Sonke Gender Justice (Co-Chair, South Africa), CARE (USA), Men for Gender Equality (Sweden), International Planned Parenthood Federation (United Kingdom), Sahayog (India) and the White Ribbon Campaign (Canada). The Advisory Committee includes UNDP, UNFPA,

UNIFEM and WHO. At the national level, there are more than 400 NGO members from sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, Asia and Europe.

The work on this study report was coordinated by Indrė Mackevičiūtė; quality assurance was carried out by colleagues at the European Institute for Gender Equality: Barbara Limanowska, Indrė Mackevičiūtė, Priya Alvarez, Sandra Pflieger, Monika Bystrzycka and Jesper Schou Hansen.

Neither the European Institute for Gender Equality nor any person acting on its behalf can be held responsible for the use made of the information contained in this report.

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# Foreword

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) acknowledges that the role of men in promoting gender equality deserves special attention at the European level and in the Member States. Encouraging men to undertake non-stereotypical roles, enabling their occupation in traditional female sectors, participating in anti-violence initiatives, tackling discrimination, sharing care responsibilities and other means must become part of gender equality policy. Efforts are required to collect more information and data on the issue, to explore new gender equality areas in relation to men, and to develop methods and tools to encourage their effective engagement.

It was in the Mid-term Work Programme 2010–2012 that the European Institute for Gender Equality set out to emphasise men's role in promoting gender equality. The selected approach foresaw treating men's involvement in this area as a horizontal issue in the Institute's activities.

The importance of EIGE's role in promoting men's engagement in gender equality, by collecting and disseminating information in the field, and providing a platform for the exchange of information, methods, practices and contacts, was highlighted on a number of occasions. Although there is still a long way to go in developing ways to integrate men's perspectives and facilitate their involvement in the areas covered by the Institute, we are pleased to present the final report of the first study launched by the Institute in the field of men and gender equality. The study was carried out in the framework of an annual working programme 2010.

EIGE aimed to map relevant actors whose activity is considered to contribute to a more effective male involvement in the promotion of gender equality. Special attention was paid to specific approaches applied and materials produced by such actors across the EU-27.

As a result of the dedication of the researchers and experts in the field, EIGE now offers a database

through its Resource and Documentation Centre containing practical information in English on EU-wide initiatives aimed at encouraging men to become part of a gender equality project. It is inspirational, it generates ideas and it provides many examples of how men are working for gender equality.

This report is a great overview of the resources available in the database and also shows how far the European Union has gone in making men gender-aware and in using their potential to achieve gender equality. I draw your attention to the reflections on the challenges and obstacles that lie ahead and emphasise how important it is to devote sufficient attention to the issue of men's role in gender equality at all levels in the EU. It is for this reason that we appreciate the study on the role of men in gender equality commissioned by the European Commission, which, at the end of 2012, will provide an extensive analysis of the situation and propose ways forward to address men's issues in gender equality, the involvement of men/fathers in domestic and family duties, and men's role at work. Our endeavor, together with relevant initiatives of the European Commission will influence further work of EIGE on men and gender equality, helping to develop a coherent approach to the issue and actions in the forthcoming years.

It is our hope that by making information available, and presenting the initiatives of people and organisations from all over the European Union who are keen to promote men's engagement in achieving gender equality, we will facilitate further exchange of information in the field, networking and cooperation.

It is essential that both women and men are aware of the benefits that gender equality brings to them as individuals and as members of communities and societies. It is also true that we can only succeed through the participation of both women and men.

**Virginija Langbakk**

*Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality*



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The European Institute for Gender Equality is an autonomous body of the European Union, established to contribute to and strengthen the promotion of gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in all Community policies and the resulting national policies, and the fight against discrimination based on sex, and to raise EU citizens' awareness of gender equality. Further information can be found online ([www.eige.europa.eu](http://www.eige.europa.eu)).

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# Executive summary

This report is the final product of the Background study on the involvement of men in gender equality in the European Institute for Gender Equality's (EIGE) working areas. The study was commissioned by EIGE and implemented by Men for Gender Equality (Sweden). The general aim was to map relevant stakeholders in all EU Member States whose activity could be considered as contributing to a more effective involvement of men in the promotion of gender equality. Special attention was placed on specific approaches applied and materials produced by such actors. The study focused on the period between 2007 and 2010 and was carried out between April and July 2011.

In addition, the research team analysed and provided commentary on the collected information and reflected on good practice examples.

## Theoretical background

The study acknowledges the variety of disciplinary and methodological approaches to understanding men, masculinities and men's practices (e.g. biology, sex role theory, psychology, psychoanalysis, feminism, sociology, gay theory, cultural studies). The interdisciplinary framework 'Critical Studies on Men' is an important theoretical framework for the project, reflecting the prominence of social sciences in the development of research on men and masculinities. The departure point for the study was to view gender equality as about realising the potential of women and men equally, whereas men can, and should, contribute positively to the eradication of gender inequalities. This must involve strategies for personal change and action to reform gender inequalities in social structures, as much as institutions and practices at the root of inequalities. The research team has also taken into account other approaches to gender equality that argue for a more radical transformation of the existing gender

order and/or a reconceptualisation of 'men' and 'women' as social categories.

## Methodological approach

The project recruited researchers to map actors and information across the 27 EU Member States through desk research, an online questionnaire and face-to-face or phone interviews, as well as an overall analysis of national contexts in relation to work with men. Where possible, researchers have highlighted examples of good practice based on commonly agreed general criteria.

Researchers were asked to categorise the actors under a fourfold definition as: 'gender-redistributive', 'gender-aware', 'gender-blind', or 'gender-conservative'/'men's rights'. In total, researchers came up with a list of 276 organisations (last updated at the end of 2011), received 141 completed questionnaires and carried out 73 interviews.

The final decision on the inclusion of actors identified by country researchers in the database was made by the core research team on close review of all 'borderline' cases. This was achieved by re-examining all available information provided by country researchers, consulting individual websites, and gaining further insight where necessary into how each actor described and presented their own activities. In some cases, further discussions took place with country researchers to come to an agreed position.

In most cases, excluded actors were those that clearly subscribed to a 'men's rights/fathers' rights' approach, particularly when there was evidence of hostility to women/women's organisations. Equality bodies (and other similar institutions) were only included if there was evidence that they were working on the issue of men and masculinities. Many organisations working with, and for, gay, bisexual

and transgender men were included. While there is considerable diversity within and between these groups, they directly or indirectly challenge orthodox models of what it is to be a man, often in ways bound up with the degradation of women and the feminine. In doing so, they help to undermine attitudes that sustain gender inequalities.

The collected information was assembled into a database that includes the names, addresses and contact details of the organisations, the types of organisation, the themes, target groups, work methods and approaches, aims/purposes and activities with regard to men and masculinities, and conference details and materials.

## Key observations

The final database includes 241 organisations and 67 individuals involved directly or indirectly in work on men and gender equality in the 27 EU Member States. The database provides an extensive list of the most relevant actors in each country.

All 27 countries are represented in the database, though the number of organisations involved varies from 2 to 24 in different countries. Sweden and the United Kingdom had the largest number of organisations (24 each), followed by Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. There tended to be fewer organisations working in the area in the newer EU Member States.

The overwhelming majority (78 %) of organisations working on men and gender equality are non-governmental organisations. These vary considerably in size and nature, from those with one staff member to those with tens or more, with a wide variety of themes, methods and tools. Some are very new and others have been active for a number of years.

An analysis of the organisations' main forms of involvement, as identified from the completed questionnaires and/or information on their websites, shows that a large number (33 %) are working broadly on gender equality, with a sub-focus on

men. The general 'gender equality' label was used in certain cases where organisations cover a range of themes related to gender equality, rather than specifically working on issues such as fatherhood or violence. Organisations working on 'violence prevention' are the next most numerous (16 %), followed by 'fatherhood' (14 %), 'health' (10 %), 'gay/bisexual/transgender' (9 %) and 'education and learning' (9 %). Other themes are more marginal: for example, only three organisations have 'work with ethnic minorities' as their main focus and only one focuses mainly on disability. Other organisations look at these issues, but it is a minor part of their work.

The methods and tools used by the organisations in the database vary considerably. An analysis of the main methods and tools shows that 'individual counselling' is the most common (53 organisations), followed by 'group work with men' and 'information/awareness-raising' (36 each). These are followed by 'research' and 'policy/political engagement' (31 each) and 'campaigns' (14). Other methods were less significant and this is, again, an analysis of the main methods used by each organisation (and does not preclude that they may also be using other methods). Most of the activity in this area is focused on direct work with individuals and groups. The rest focuses on campaigning, awareness or policy work.

## Overview of emerging issues

A number of key areas of concern and emerging issues were identified through the analysis of collected information and further reflected in this report.

In many cases, national researchers felt that **gender equality** itself was quite a new term and often not well understood, and that work on men and masculinities in this context was even more recent. In addition, gender equality was in most countries seen as a 'women's issue' and many organisations did not see themselves involved with men and gender equality.



Actors emphasise **the relevance of gender equality** for men in their activities. For example, gender equality holds the promise of improvements in men's and boys' relationships among themselves, as well as with women and girls. Greater gender equality would reduce the pressures on men to conform to damaging and rigid forms of masculinity. Conversely, gender inequality has damaging effects on the personal health and well-being of men as well as women.

With regard to **intersectionality and identity**, this report acknowledges that there is no one universal form of 'masculinity'. Indeed, there are similarly significant differences among men as among women: the term 'masculinities' is often used to reflect the various ways in which men relate to hegemonic notions of masculinity. The materials collected for the study made it possible to take a closer look at issues for gay, bisexual and transgender men, men from ethnic minorities, boys and young men, older men and men with disabilities. It was also possible to examine the influence of social backgrounds, including class, inequality and location in shaping men's identities.

This report poses a question **why men hesitate to get involved in gender equality issues** including the fact that in some countries gender equality is not on the public agenda or is mainly seen as a 'women's issue'. The researchers noted that men feel considerable pressure to conform to traditional roles and stereotypes, and that men, women and institutions bolster these stereotypes. Against this background, it is unsurprising that many men throughout the EU display either apathy or resistance to change towards gender equality. One factor identified as undermining men's confidence to become involved in gender equality is the lack of positive male role models in society and the media. Fears that engaging men in gender equality strategies may hinder the empowerment of women may act as an additional obstacle.

Finally, the researchers look at **ways to overcome the current obstacles to men's involvement**.

Challenges include the fact that addressing apathy or resistance among many men must be accompanied by efforts to address the real problems that some men experience. The question is also how to make men aware that participating in gender equality efforts is worthwhile, beyond those men who are already active or potentially interested in this area. Catalysts include presenting evidence-based benefits of gender equality for men, receiving support from women and women's groups, and ensuring that men feel they are listened to. It is also important to take the diversity of men's identities, motivations, attitudes and roles into account and not ignore or underestimate the risks of not engaging men.

## Conclusions

The study's researchers found that a considerable number of initiatives were being implemented in many EU Member States in the areas of men working for gender equality and men and masculinities. However, compared to work on gender equality that focuses on women, these areas are still underdeveloped and patchy. Therefore, further efforts to engage men in gender equality are needed at various levels. It is essential that men work towards genuine gender equality enabling women and men to enjoy new dimensions of social, economic, professional and personal life.

# Introduction

This report was produced as a final product of the study commissioned by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in 2010. Acknowledging the importance of men's involvement in gender equality, EIGE aimed to contribute by collecting, systematising and making background information available on the actors involved in this area across the EU. It also sought to outline the methods, tools and approaches that actors employ in their work and the materials they produce. EIGE endeavoured to identify relevant stakeholders active in the field of men and masculinities in line with its future European Network on Gender Equality (EuroGender). The initiative also contributed to the development of a coherent approach of EIGE to the issue of men and gender equality.

## Scope

The research team has mapped relevant stakeholders active in engaging men in gender equality work in all 27 EU Member States during 2007–2010. The focus is on actors implementing concrete programmes, projects, interventions or other activities that engage men in gender equality. As a result, an online database of actors, methods, tools and materials was assembled and made accessible through EIGE's Resource and Documentation Centre<sup>(1)</sup>.

This final report provides an overview of the information compiled in the database on men and gender equality in the EU; it also summarises the main findings on developments, patterns and trends in the Member States, reflects on emerging issues and obstacles that hinder men's more active involvement in the promotion of gender equality and presents some examples of practices for achieving gender equality through men's involvement.

(1) The database is accessible through EIGE's Resource and Documentation Centre (<http://www.eige.europa.eu>). The database was updated by EIGE in December 2011.

## Methodological approach

Coverage of all EU Member States was ensured by employing national/regional researchers who collected information through desk research, questionnaires and interviews in response to a format set by the core research team. The researchers provided practical information to the core research team to create the database, and also compiled country reports to reflect on the patterns and trends in their respective countries with regard to men's involvement in gender equality.

A number of methods were used for the mapping exercise. Firstly, the main actors (and key documents from 2007–2010) were identified for each country through existing contacts and internet searches. In this project, 'actors' refer to:

- organisations – including civil society, public or private bodies – involving (or seeking to involve) men in gender equality issues;
- academic institutions/key academics undertaking research/analysis on this topic;
- influential experts/trainers/journalists/private consultants working on or writing about the issue.

From this preliminary investigation, country/regional researchers drew up lists of actors to explore in more detail. For this purpose, researchers were asked to categorise the actors under a fourfold definition as 'gender-redistributive', 'gender-aware', 'gender-blind', or 'gender-conservative'/'men's rights'. The researchers then filled out basic information about each in a common format, from which a database of 241 organisations and institutions and 67 individuals was compiled. The database describes each organisation and includes references to materials such as: projects it has implemented; programmes, interventions or other activities such as information campaigns; reports, studies, working



papers or articles (news or research); and assessments, manuals, guidelines, publications, training materials and audiovisual materials.

Secondly, a brief questionnaire was sent by country/regional researchers to a targeted list of actors. The number and nature of actors chosen reflected the context in each country. The questionnaire asked for information about the actor's background, forms, aims/objectives, target groups, work methods and approaches, documents, tools and materials developed, implemented projects and results. A total of 141 questionnaire responses helped to fill out the basic details in the format descriptions, providing a mixture of factual material and opinion.

In order to develop a more rounded picture, country/national researchers also conducted 73 interviews with informed actors in 23 Member States, based on a separate set of outline questions. The results included extensive comments on relevant issues such as: public discourses about men, masculinity and gender equality; the benefits of involving men; barriers, risks and challenges; effective interventions and methods; major gaps in this work. Just over a third of respondents were linked to NGOs working in the field, just under a third were academics and around a quarter worked for government bodies with the remaining small number being politicians, journalists or members of men's groups.

The research team has drawn extensively on the views and experiences highlighted in the interviews as a key source for analysis in Chapter 4 of this report. Country reports and the growing volume of national and international literature (e.g. on fatherhood, caring, education, men's violence, men's health and work) provided further information.

## Report structure

**Chapter 1** describes the theoretical background that provided a framework for the project's research activities. It also describes the background to decisions on mapping the actors involved in gender equality and including them in the database.

**Chapter 2** provides an overview of methodological, practical and theoretical considerations in compiling the database. It presents information on the database's coverage and scope, and reflects on the processes involved in the mapping exercise.

**Chapter 3** provides a general overview of information collected for the database on numbers of organisations and individuals, types of organisation, the main forms of involvement, and the main methods and tools employed.

In **Chapter 4**, the researchers provide insights into emerging issues in men's involvement in gender equality in the European Union. This is based on interviews with relevant stakeholders in most Member States and previous research in the field. Among other issues, the research team looks at the challenges related to a general lack of awareness of gender equality, and of the benefits of gender equality. They also reflect on the issues related to intersectionality and identity, and describe what hinders the involvement of men in gender equality issues.

This report concludes with some reflections on how to move the work forward across the EU.

# Chapter 1

# theoretical

# masculinities

# framework men





# Chapter 1

## Theoretical framework

The study acknowledges the variety of disciplinary and methodological approaches to understanding men, masculinities, and men's practices (e.g. biology, sex role theory, psychology, psychoanalysis, feminism, sociology, gay theory and cultural studies).

Interdisciplinary Critical Studies on Men (CSMs) provide an important theoretical framework for the project, reflecting the prominence of social sciences in the development of research on men and masculinities. Part of a broader project on women's studies and gender research, CSMs have 'named' men and masculinities as explicit objects of theory and critique since the 1990s. Building on insights from the work of theorists such as Connell and Hearn<sup>(2)</sup>, the project core team sees men and masculinities as:

- **socially constructed and produced**, rather than 'natural';
- **variable and changing** across time and between and within different societies, and through life courses and biographies;
- **collective and individual**, reflected in institutional regimes (e.g. in schools, sports clubs and workplaces) and in personal relations;
- **intersecting with other social divisions** (e.g. age, race, ethnicity, faith, class, disability and sexual orientation) in a dynamic way;
- rooted in complex, and sometimes contradictory, **gendered power relations**.

The project draws on analyses that detail men's structural dominance in society (e.g. higher incomes and less unpaid caring and household work than women)

(2) For example: Connell, R. W. (2005), *Masculinities – Second Edition*, Polity, Cambridge; Kimmel, M. S., Hearn, J., Connell, R. W. (eds) (2005), *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, Sage, California/London/New Delhi.

and how this is reflected in social relations that make it appear 'normal' for male superiority to be maintained. Nevertheless, it also acknowledges that these advantages are not shared equally among men and that it is important to address both the social problems that men cause *and* the problems that some men experience. This involves a nuanced analysis of gender relations, identities and practices that goes beyond a simplistic polarised categorisation of men as either 'perpetrators' or 'victims'.

The second theoretical framework for the project is provided by the extensive academic literature that compares welfare regimes in different European countries. Much of this work (e.g. the work of Esping-Andersen) has been extensively criticised for paying insufficient attention to gender relations. For this reason, this analysis draws on the framework established by CROME (Critical Research on Men in Europe) network<sup>(3)</sup>. This categorisation shows that among European countries, there are considerable differences in approach to gender equality law and policy, and in the extent to which men and masculinity issues have been explored.

### Men's relations with gender equality

The European Commission defines gender equality as 'the result of the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person's sex in opportunities and the allocation of resources or benefits or in access to services'<sup>(4)</sup>. The Commission's 'Strategy for equality between women and men 2010–2015' identifies actions to stimulate, change and achieve progress

(3) Hearn, J., Pringle, K. (2006), *European Perspectives on Men and Masculinities – National and Transnational Approaches*, Palgrave, Basingstoke; Pringle, K. et al. (2006), *Men and Masculinities in Europe*, Whiting and Birch, London.

(4) European Commission, Background document accompanying the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions *Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010–2015*, Brussels, SEC(2010) 1080 final of 21 September 2010.



in six priority areas: equal economic independence; equal pay; equality in decision-making; an end to gender-based violence; external action; and horizontal issues. It also highlights a dual approach to implementation, combining gender mainstreaming with specific measures. In relation to men, the strategy states that 'gender equality needs the active contribution, support and participation of men, and policies should also address gender-related inequalities that affect boys/men' (citing literacy rates, early school-leaving and occupational health as examples).

However, men's relations with, and responses to, gender equality are complex. As Hearn has noted, men's public and private practices are commonly not seen as gendered: 'Much of what men do is not seen as 'about gender', related to gender equality or about making gender relations and gender divisions more or less equal or unequal'<sup>(5)</sup>. In reality, men's practices (re)producing gender inequality are usually embedded in social, economic and cultural relations and structures and are taken implicitly to be the 'norm', although often not visible.

Nevertheless, Hearn also highlights that there has been significant growth in recent years in explicit 'gender-conscious' activities among men. These can, however, range from, pro-feminist initiatives to support gender equality at one end of the spectrum to anti-feminist groups seeking to undermine gender equality at the other, with various other positions in between (including, for example, those of gay groups or men's health activists). Of course, these poles reflect very different understandings of the meaning of 'gender equality'.

The study's research team sees gender equality as about realising the potential of women and men equally, and believes that men can, and should, contribute positively to the eradication of gender inequalities. This must involve both strategies for

personal change and action to reform unequal gendered social structures, institutions and practices at the root of gender inequalities.

In saying this, the team acknowledges that there are other approaches to gender equality that argue for more radical transformation of the existing gender order and/or a reconceptualisation of 'men' and 'women' as social categories. For the purpose of the mapping, an inclusive approach to these perspectives was adopted where they were encountered.

In contrast, actors were mostly excluded if they clearly subscribed to a 'men's rights'/'fathers' rights' approach, particularly if there was evidence of hostility to women or women's organisations. This issue is addressed in more detail in the next section.

(5) Hearn, J. (2006), 'Men and Gender Equality', Varanka, J., Narhinen, A., Siukola, R. (2006), *Men and Gender Equality: Towards Progressive Policies*, Conference Report, 5 and 6 October 2006, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Helsinki.







# Chapter 2

## Compiling the database

The database compiled within the study, and available through EIGE's Resource and Documentation Centre, includes a list of actors organised by country, with separate fields for: name; contact details (including postal address, e-mail, phone number and website); type of organisation; theme; target group; work methods and approaches; aims/purpose; activities 2007–2012; conferences; and materials.

### Criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of actors

Drawing on existing literature relating to gender analysis frameworks<sup>(6)</sup>, the project team originally proposed the following categorisation of actors and interventions.

- **Gender-transformative (or redistributive):** those that intend to transform the existing distribution of resources and responsibilities to create more equitable gender relations. These programmes show in their descriptions that they seek to critically reflect on, question or change institutional practices and broader social norms that create and reinforce gender inequality and vulnerability for men and women.
- **Gender-aware (or gender-sensitive):** those that recognise that men and women have differing, and sometimes conflicting, needs,

interests and priorities. These interventions target men's and women's specific needs, but leave the existing distribution of resources and responsibilities intact.

- **Gender-blind:** those that fail to make any distinction between men's and women's needs.
- **Gender-conservative/men's rights:** those that aim to maintain or restore gender relations based on gender inequalities.

Country researchers were asked to use their judgement to apply the project's selection criteria and choose only actors relevant to the project's aims (those in the first two categories above). It was acknowledged that researchers were also likely to encounter actors that fell in the third and fourth categories, but that it was not necessary to include them in the actor's lists.

Some researchers made it clear that they had rigorously applied the project criteria. For example, the researcher for the Netherlands stated that: 'Most actors in the list are definitely "gender-transformative", some are "gender-aware". Actors who are explicitly reactionary, "gender-conservative" or aimed at "men's rights" were not included in the selection.'

Other researchers struggled however, for a number of reasons, to use the gender criteria (transformative/aware/blind/conservative) in the way that was envisaged by the core research team. Some found it hard to decide which classification should be attached to a particular actor, as the category boundaries are not easy to define. Sometimes, publicly available information on specific actors was out of date, incomplete or insufficiently detailed to allow a reasoned judgement. In some countries, there appeared few or no actors in the 'gender-transformative' or even sometimes the 'gender-aware' categories and researchers looked instead to organisations working more generally on gender equality.

Several organisations were therefore included in the initial mapping that should probably be des-

(6) Variations on the categorisation used in this project are described in, for example: Kabeer, N. (1994), *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*, Verso, London; Gupta, G., Whelan, D., Allendorf, K. (2003), *Integrating Gender into HIV/AIDS Programmes – review paper for expert consultation*, World Health Organisation, Geneva; Barker, G., Ricardo, C., Nascimento, M. (2007), *Engaging men and boys in changing gender-based inequality in health: Evidence from programme interventions*, World Health Organisation/Instituto Promundo, Geneva.

ignated 'gender-blind' or 'gender-conservative', even though researchers were not asked to include them. In a few cases, researchers indicated their uncertainty about whether to include them and decisions were then taken in conjunction with the core research team. In many other cases, researchers will have identified and rejected these organisations, in line with the project's original criteria. It is not, however, possible to give a strict indication of the extent to which this occurred.

After the initial mapping produced 276 organisations, the core research team fully reviewed and revised the database. This was done to ensure that the study criteria were consistently applied and that information on all the actors was of a high standard, up to date and reliable. This approach also helped ensure a common approach between countries and to counter any inconsistencies in country researchers' decisions. The process was undertaken systematically and involved checking actors in the database against final lists in country reports, supplementing database entries with information from completed questionnaires, identifying and filling in any gaps as far as possible and making the referencing as coherent as possible.

In relation to decisions on applying the criteria and on including or excluding specific actors, the core research team carefully examined 'borderline' cases by: re-examining all information from country researchers; looking up individual websites and (where necessary) using Google Translate to gain further insight into how each actor described and presented their activities; and further discussions with the country researcher to come to an agreed position.

Special attention was paid to certain types of organisation in this revision. Equality bodies (and other similar institutions) were only included if there was evidence that they were working on the issue of men and masculinities. For example, the UK's Equality and Human Rights Commission had helped set a new policy agenda for flexible working and leave policies, highlighting the importance of encourag-

ing fathers to play a greater role in caring. It had also provided financial support to the Coalition on Men and Boys for a major report on men, masculinities and public policy.

Similarly, at EU level the European Commission's Expert Group on Gender and Employment (EGGE) and the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men were both included on the basis that they had produced reports on men and gender equality. The European Commission's Expert Group on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, Health and Long-Term Care Issues (EGGSI) had produced similar work and was, therefore, excluded<sup>(7)</sup>.

From the project's start, the core research team has believed that organisations working with and for gay, bisexual and transgender men should be included in the mapping. While there is considerable diversity within and between these groups, they directly or indirectly challenge orthodox models of what it is to be a man, often in ways bound up with the degradation of women and the feminine<sup>(8)</sup>.

In doing so, they help to undermine attitudes that sustain gender inequalities. Linked to this, LGBT Denmark (the Danish national organisation for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered persons) argued in its questionnaire response that its focus was 'not on engaging men in gender equality, but to engage society in gender understanding and breaking down gender stereotypes'. The Italian organisation Famiglie Arcobaleno similarly stated: 'We believe that enhancing the paternity of gay couples is beneficial to the fight against machismo by providing a different image of man, perfectly capable of taking care of small children and without the constant presence of a woman.' In practice, the researchers excluded only a small number of LGBT organisations. This happened

(7) Both networks have ceased to exist and are superseded by ENEGE – European Network of Experts on Gender Equality – from 2012 (<http://www.enege.eu>)

(8) Edwards, T., 'Queering the Pitch? Gay Masculinities', Connell, R. W., Hearn, J., Kimmel, M. (eds) (2005), *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, Sage, California/London/New Delhi.



in cases where such organisations expressly stated that their aims did not fit with those of the study.

Another group of organisations that presented some dilemmas for the researchers were networks of men self-consciously involved in activities relating to men and gender. Flood argues<sup>(9)</sup> that this loosely defined 'men's movement' can be understood in terms of five overlapping strands: men's liberation; anti-sexist or pro-feminist; spiritual and mythopoetic; Christian; and men's rights and fathers' rights. Men's liberation groups focus on the damage, isolation and suffering inflicted on boys and men through their socialisation into manhood. Anti-sexist/pro-feminist approaches acknowledge men's pain, but give greater emphasis to male privileges and gender inequality. Mythopoetic men derive their thinking from Jungian psychology and in particular the work of Bly, in which men are seen as being in need of 'healing' because they have lost contact with their deep masculine essence and the rituals of manhood. Christian men's groups are dedicated to uniting men around the ministry. Men's rights and fathers' rights groups embrace a variety of viewpoints<sup>(10)</sup>. They tend to come together, however, around core arguments that men's roles are damaging to men, that men are powerless in relation to women, that women or feminism are to blame for men's plight, and that men are now the real victims in current gender relations.

The researchers decided to include actors from the first two categories above. A more in-depth assessment was undertaken of spiritual/mythopoetic groups and those that might be characterised by the 'men's rights'/fathers' rights' label. As noted above, mythopoetic ideas often strive to conserve traditional notions of masculinity. Where this was the case, groups were excluded from the database. Where groups worked on personal development from

a gender equality perspective, they were included. Organisations considered to have rejected the study's understanding of gender equality and that were hostile to women/women's organisations were excluded.

## Database coverage

The core research team believes that the database provides an extensive list of the most relevant actors in all EU Member States, although the number of actors per country varied considerably. In some cases, researchers were unable to find many actors addressing men's role in gender equality or issues relating to men/masculinities, despite the researchers' strong experience in gender work. These instances were mainly, although not exclusively, in the newer EU Member States (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia). A common conclusion was that such work was either rare or non-existent in these countries. The issue is further commented on in the analysis in this report.

There is also a short section in the database comprising a basic list of six of the main organisations or networks that work on men and gender equality issues at European level. They include MenEngage Europe, PLENT (International Platform for Equal, Non-Transferable and 100 % paid Parental), the European Men's Health Forum, the European Commission's Expert Group on Gender and Employment (EGGE)<sup>(11)</sup>, the European Institute for Gender Equality and the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. More work in this area would require a further and more detailed study.

The database is also more comprehensive in relation to some types of actor than others. The statistical overview (Chapter 3) suggests that by far the largest category of organisations is NGOs. This is unsurprising for a number of reasons. This label includes

(9) Flood, M. (2007), 'Men's Movement', Flood, M., Gardiner, J. K., Pease, B., Pringle, K. (2007), *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*, Routledge, London/New York.

(10) Clatterbaugh, K. (2007), 'Men's Rights', Flood, M., Gardiner, J. K., Pease, B., Pringle, K. (2007), *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*, Routledge, London/New York.

(11) As of 2012, the Network is called ENEGE (European Network of Experts on Gender Equality).

a huge variety and number of organisations (including self-organised groups, charities, service providers, faith organisations and campaigning organisations at local/community, regional and international levels). Moreover, NGOs often initiate innovative work, pushing the boundaries of mainstream provision. Given the exploratory nature of much of the work highlighted in the study, it follows that NGOs often play a central role in its development.

In contrast, there was less information on state actors, including national/regional/local government and equality bodies. While many of these organisations aimed to promote gender equality (often among other goals), far fewer had an explicit focus on men's involvement in gender equality or on men and masculinity issues. In line with the project criteria, the core team aimed to include only those actors in the database where there was evidence of some specific interest or history of activity in relation to men/masculinities. It appeared that state actors also tended to undertake less proactive promotion of their work in this area than NGOs (via websites, etc.), making it harder to ascertain the necessary information to complete database entries.

A geographical perspective is also very relevant. Researchers generally tended to identify organisations working at a national level; some also had local branches or members, but the majority operated at the national level. Researchers often chose these organisations because they were considered to carry out significant activity, with a nationwide influence. Overall, it was ensured that national networking organisations were captured (Germany, Austria, Poland). In general, the decision was made to include organisations with a national reach as far as possible. However, it is acknowledged that there are some smaller grass-roots groups working at a local level that would merit inclusion in any further in-depth mapping ('It would be interesting to invest more time in building the network, and discovering smaller [activist] groups or departments in organisations that do pioneering work with men and boys' (Belgium,

Netherlands)). A more detailed study could seek to more fully represent decentralised or devolved governance structures in different EU Member States. There was, however, evidence that some researchers tried to take this into account. In the United Kingdom, for example, most of the actors were based in England (and working at UK level), but attention was also given to identifying actors in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The database also contains a wide range of information on independent research centres and university research departments. In most cases, however, researchers have chosen to highlight the work of key academics who are working on masculinity and gender equality issues (and in particular on those undertaking research that is practice-orientated and/or has been instrumental in social change). This decision seemed sensible, given the desire to avoid a very long and generalised list of research departments working on gender.

The database contains fewer entries in the categories of 'experts, trainers and journalists' and, in practice, key individuals were often included through an organisational affiliation. Some individual politicians have been included, as well as some private consultants. The number of journalists identified is small. As the UK researcher stated: 'Although information was gathered in relation to some key journalists, in the end these were not entered into the database. The journalists tended to be columnists who wrote regularly about women/gender issues (among other things), but rarely about men/masculinity as such. It was also very time-consuming to identify relevant articles, and impossible to identify which had impact in terms of public and policy discourse.'









# Chapter 3

## Overall analysis of findings and overview of the mapped information

### Numbers of organisations and individuals

A huge amount of information has been collected during the project on organisations and individuals working on issues relevant to men and gender equality in the 27 EU Member States. The final list of 241 organisations and 67 individuals includes academics, trainers, consultants, journalists and politicians involved directly or indirectly in work on men and gender equality in Europe.

The research found that there was some work in this area in all 27 countries. The number of organisations active in different countries varied from 2 to 24. Sweden and the United Kingdom had the largest number of organisations (24 each), followed by Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. The newer Member States tended to have fewer organisations.

Another interesting finding was that the countries where researchers found the most activity (Sweden, the United Kingdom, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands) were not dissimilar to those with the smallest gender gaps in a (2010) ranking by the World Economic Forum (WEF)<sup>(12)</sup>. Nordic countries come highest in the ranking, followed by Ireland (6), Spain (11), Germany (13), Belgium (14), the United Kingdom (15) and the Netherlands (17). Various other countries are low-placed and carry out little work with men in the context of gender equality. Of course, this is also mediated by factors such as size, but it is interesting to note that countries near

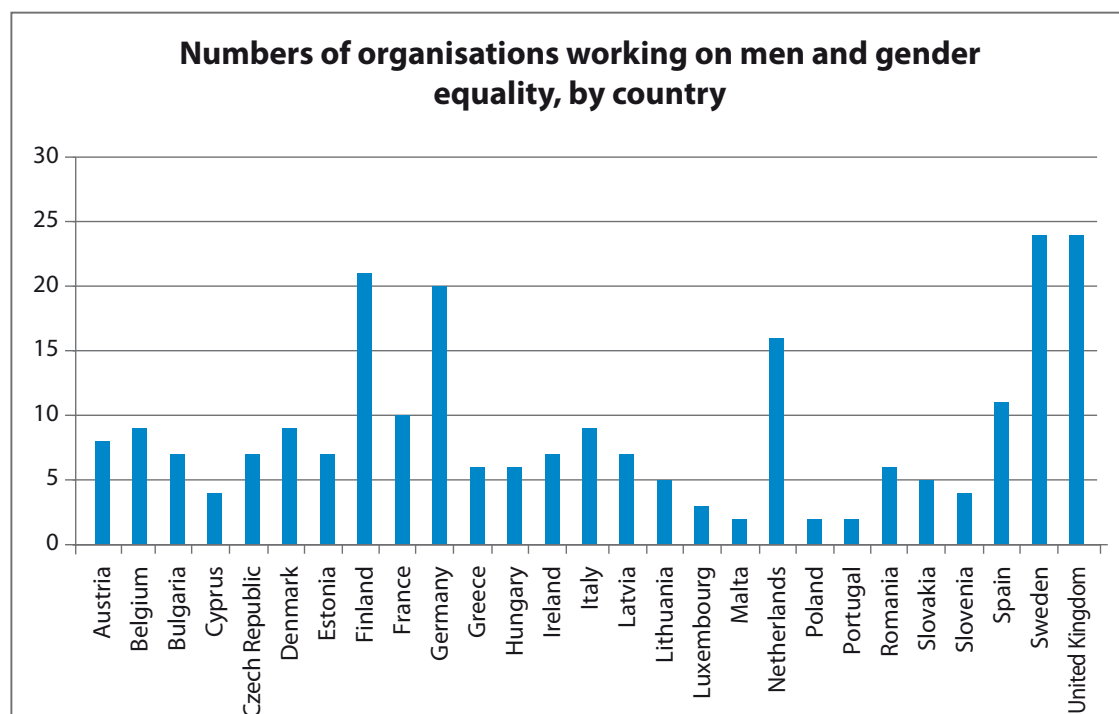
the bottom of the WEF table also come fairly low in the analysis in terms of work with men on gender equality. It would seem from the analysis that countries with greater gender equality (according to WEF) also appear to focus more on work with men.

In other words, where gender equality is more central to public discourse and government action, it is likely to have the knock-on benefit of making issues on men's involvement in gender equality more visible.

The 241 organisations in the study are broken down by country in Figure 3.1.

... it is interesting to note that countries near the bottom of the WEF table also come fairly low in the analysis in terms of work with men on gender equality. It would seem from the analysis that countries with greater gender equality (according to WEF) also appear to focus more on work with men.

(12) <http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2010>

**Figure 3.1: The 241 organisations in the study broken down by country**

## Types of organisations

The research found that the overwhelming majority (67 %) of organisations working in this arena in the 27 EU Member States are NGOs. These vary considerably in size and nature, from those with one staff member to those with tens and covering a wide variety of themes, methods and tools (see the following sections). Some are very new and others have been around for a number of years. NGOs also vary considerably in terms of their relationship to the state, which, likewise, varies between countries.

Of the 27 Member States, the research identified only 16 with national government bodies working on this issue and 12 with regional or local government activity. Finland, Sweden, Austria and Latvia all have two or three national government bodies working on this subject, while Spain, Sweden and Belgium have regional or local government initiatives. This reflects different governance arrangements to some extent, with strong regional and

local structures in the latter countries. This is also the case in Germany, but researchers focused on the federal level because of the country's size and complexity. In Spain, researcher Paco Abril Morales notes that: 'The majority of respondents in Spain agree that institutional support has been vital to the significant growth of the movement and actions that foster the change in attitudes of men towards equality. This growth began perhaps with the creation in 1999 of the first institutional programme "Men for Equality" in the city of Jerez de la Frontera (Andalusia). This programme is still active today and in 2001, it promoted the first National Conference on masculinity in Spain.'

There is also academic interest in the subject in many countries: the study identified 29 research centres working on some aspect of men and gender equality. This interest correlates with the individual actors identified, who were overwhelmingly academics (76 %).



Researchers also found five relevant equality bodies (Greece, Cyprus, Lithuania, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom), three private companies (Sweden), two private consultancies (Germany and the United Kingdom), two trade unions (Denmark and Germany), two religious organisations (Germany), two subgroups of political parties (Finland), four websites and a donor (the Netherlands).

## Main forms of involvement

In order to develop overall statistics on the database entries, it was necessary to decide the main activity theme for each actor, as multiple answers would have been confusing and potentially misleading. In many cases, this decision was relatively easy; however, some organisations covered more than one main theme and, in these circumstances, the research team tended to apply a more general 'gender equality' label.

An analysis of organisations' main forms of involvement found that a large number (33 %) are working broadly on gender equality, with a sub-focus on men. This was identified from the questionnaires that organisations completed and/or their websites. In some cases, a decision was made to use the more general 'gender equality' label, where organisations covered a range of themes rather than specific issues such as fatherhood or violence. Organisations working on 'violence prevention' are the next most numerous (16 %), followed by 'fatherhood/caregiving' (14 %), 'health' (10 %), 'gay/bisexual/transgender issues' (9 %) and 'education and learning' (9 %). Other themes are more marginal: for example, only three organisations have 'ethnic minorities' as their main focus and only one focuses mainly on 'disability'. There is clearly room for further work in these areas. This is not to say that other organisations do not look at these issues, but it is a minor part of their work.

As an example, the research found that the number of organisations working on the prevention of vio-

lence varies considerably from country to country. The highest number being seven in Sweden, with six in Finland and the United Kingdom, down to none in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Romania. Although there were some limitations to the extent of mapping which researchers could undertake, this finding is interesting in relation to the Nordic countries. In particular, it appears to mirror recent evidence of differing approaches to research and policy on gendered violence in Sweden and Denmark; this suggests that Sweden has developed considerably more work on this theme than Denmark in recent years<sup>(13)</sup>.

Under each category, there were a number of different kinds of organisation. For example, KAST Göteborg in Sweden stands for 'Köpare Av Sexuella Tjänster' (Buyers of Sexual Services). KAST is a unit in the Social Services Department of Gothenburg Municipality, which offers interventions to men who pay for sex in an attempt to reduce the demand for prostitution. Other projects offer counselling to violent men or those with potential for violence. For example, Finland's Kriisikeskus Mobile (Crisis Centre Mobile) aims to help men who have experienced a crisis, feel alone with their problems or are stuck in a difficult life situation, or who wish to talk with a professional advisor. This is often connected with domestic or relational violence. The United Kingdom appears to have the most active campaign, the White Ribbon Campaign, which seeks to involve men in tackling violence against women and girls. Its current activities include campaigning at sport and music events, work in schools and colleges, developing a network of supporting local authorities and policy work with national organisations and the UK government.

(13) Pringle, K., Balkmar, D., Iovanni, L. (2010), 'Trouble in paradise: exploring patterns of research and policy response to men's violence in Denmark and Sweden', *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, Vol. 18(2).

## Main methods and tools employed

The questionnaire asked actors to identify their main methods and approaches from a standardised list. The original list included the following categories: individual counselling; group work with men; group work with men and women; men as allies to women/women's issues; research; policy/political engagement; campaigns; networking; media work; publications/website; and 'other' (which respondents were asked to specify). As a result of responses, the categories 'information/awareness-raising', 'law/rights', 'training' and 'investment' were added, as these were placed in the 'other' category and did not fit neatly in existing ones.

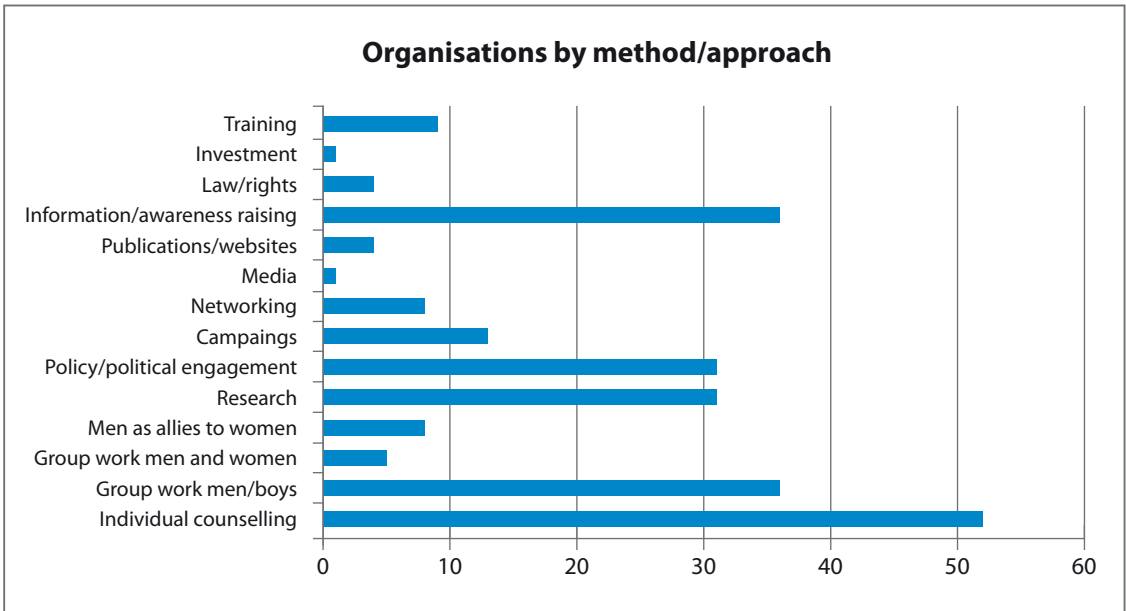
Most of these categories are self-explanatory, but some require further elaboration. In particular, 'individual counselling' was taken to include the provision of individual advice and guidance (e.g. in relation to health or fatherhood), as well as therapeutic or clinical intervention. Similarly, 'group work with men' included education projects, social or sporting activities and 'men's groups' of various kinds, in addition to all-male groups based on therapeutic or clinical intervention. It was also taken to encompass activities with young men and boys rather than just adults. 'Men as allies to women/women's groups' was rarely identified as a main method, but was primarily used to describe the activities of pro-feminist groups and/or women's organisations in which men were also involved (often in a supporting role). 'Information/awareness-raising' was applied in cases where actors were involved in a general range of activities rather than one specific aspect (e.g. running a website, producing publications and media work). As such, this acts to some extent as an 'umbrella' category that may include some or all more specific activities. 'Law/rights' was both a theme of some actors' work and a working method: a good example was the work

of ombudsman/commissioner offices, several of which had the specific remit of taking up individual complaints on rights violations. 'Investment' was added to cover the activities of foundations and fundraisers, but this category was rarely applied in practice.

An analysis of the main methods and approaches (Figure 3.2) shows that 'individual counselling' is the most common (53 organisations), followed by 'group work with men' and 'information/awareness-raising' (36 each), and then 'research' and 'policy/political engagement' (31 each) and 'campaigns' (14). Again, this analysis is of the main method for each organisation, which does not preclude the fact that they may also be using others.



**Figure 3.2: Analysis of main methods and approaches**



For the purpose of the study, ‘tools and materials’ to be mapped included reports, studies, working papers, assessments, manuals, guidelines, leaflets, publications, training materials and audiovisual materials. However, researchers did not provide a specific list when asking actors to state the tools they used because it was felt that this might restrict the range of tools described. No in-depth analysis of the huge range of tools developed was undertaken in this project, but some noteworthy examples are now identified and presented below (especially in the field of training).

In **Austria**, Frauenservice Graz and Männerberatung Graz organise GenderWerkstätte (Gender-Labs), a network of trainers, adult educators, researchers, organisational consultants and other experts. Each year, GenderWerkstätte runs workshops, seminars, speeches and other educational activities (<http://www.genderwerkstaette.at>) and also offers a five-module course on gender competence and mainstreaming.

In **Denmark**, KVINFO has established a mentor network for men from ethnic minorities, modelled on a successful initiative for women from ethnic minorities. The network aims to enhance the integration and participation of ethnic minorities in social life and the labour market by allowing employed men to mentor male immigrants and refugees searching for a job or education. The ‘New Men in Denmark’ project recorded successful integration stories told by men from ethnic minorities and presents their stories, and other positive stories of men discussing the opportunities and challenges of life in Denmark, online.

In **Finland**, Lyömätön Linja Espoo started the Alternative to Violence programme in 1994 and has continuously developed it over the years. The programme includes individual meetings, group work and follow-up meetings for men (<http://www.lyomatonlinja.fi/Sivusto%209/Alternative%20to%20Violence%20Program.html>). It also includes service guidance for all family members who have been involved in situations of domestic violence.

In **Germany**, Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancengleichheit e.V. (Competence Centre for Technology-Diversity-Equal Opportunities) established the New Paths for Boys (Neue Wege für Jungs) programme in 2005. This programme inspires local initiatives on special activities to meet boys' needs during the transition from school to vocational life. Multipliers receive assistance and can benefit from nationwide networking and a professional exchange of ideas. A Boys' Day on future prospects for boys was held nationwide on 14 April 2011 for the first time, bringing together a wide range of activities for boys on career and life planning. Students, parents and teachers can search for Boys' Day activities on the action map online (<http://www.boys-day.de>). Materials (e.g. a poster, flyer, info booklet for boys, supportive guides and checklists for activities, initiatives and projects) (<http://www.boys-day.de/Service/Downloadcenter>) and film clips ([http://www.boys-day.de/Ueber\\_den\\_Boys\\_Day/Boys\\_Day-Infofilmclips](http://www.boys-day.de/Ueber_den_Boys_Day/Boys_Day-Infofilmclips)) are also available.

In **Greece**, the Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI) ran the 'Sensitisation of teachers' programme and interventional programmes for the promotion of gender equality in 2002–2008. The project aimed to combat gender stereotypes from an early age, providing awareness training to teachers and students and encouraging young women and men to explore non-traditional educational paths. The educational tools produced within the project's framework amounted to 10 volumes of material.

MOVISIE is a centre for social development in the **Netherlands**. Among a range of projects and activities, it runs Man actief, a method for activating immigrant men in a vulnerable position. It aims to reduce the social isolation and improve the self-esteem of immigrant men, together with practical work on transition to voluntary or paid work or a follow-up course. Man actief has developed a trainers handbook, which addresses core ques-

tions about men's position in family and society under the themes of identity and culture, society and identity, manhood, family, religion, health and labour. The method and training manual were tested in four pilot programmes in four cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague). In each pilot, about 15 migrant men were challenged to follow an eight-week training programme focused on self-respect. The men were also challenged to become active members of society, by securing paid or voluntary work, starting courses or other activities. Sixty men started the pilots and 38 carried on to further activities.

In **Spain**, AHIGE (Asociación de Hombres por la Igualdad de Género – Men's Gender Equality Association) is involved in a wide range of activities: training (online and offline courses for experts on the treatment of violent men and men and equality); gender and men and equality sensitisation for youths and adults; intervention programmes (for male abusers and gender school awareness); the promotion of men's groups; and public campaigns. Among its materials are: Male responsibility at home (Co-respond: <http://www.corresponde.ahige.es>); Young equality online network (Red-Jóvenes.es: <http://www.redjovenes.es>); an online magazine (<http://www.hombresigualitarios.ahige.es>); and a childcare guide for new fathers ([http://www.ahige.org/guia\\_cuidados.pdf](http://www.ahige.org/guia_cuidados.pdf); <http://www.homesigualitaris.cat/>).

In **Sweden**, Män för Jämställdhet organises a range of activities including: advocacy work on gender equality policy that focuses on transforming men's attitudes and masculinities; training services on the topic of men, masculinities and gender equality for municipalities, schools, organisations, workplaces, fire services, the military, etc.; technical assistance for boys' support groups; annual campaigns on violence against women; educational support groups for fathers-to-be; and educational support groups for boys. Killfragor.se (BoysQuestions.com) is a web-based service for boys aged 10 to 18 that



uses chat and e-mail as channels for boys to communicate with adults trained in masculinities and gender equality (<http://www.killfragor.se>). There is also a training manual. Machofabriken (The Macho Factory) provides film-based group educational material for young men and women on the social norms of masculinities and gender equality (<http://www.machofabriken.se>).

In the **United Kingdom**, the Navigator development programme is a powerful and pioneering development course for men. It is the UK's first personal and work development programme specifically researched and developed for non-management and junior management men. The programme enables men to identify clear, practical and realistic steps they want to take in their lives and then develop the skills and determination to do something about them.

Developed following the success of its sister Springboard programme for women, the Navigator development programme has been successfully used by over 5 000 men from all sectors in the world of work. It is delivered through a specially trained network of highly professional trainers. It consists of five components delivered over three months: a regularly updated workbook that embraces material for the entire programme; four one-day workshops; the provision of real, relevant and inspiring role models; the encouragement of effective networks within the group; and peer coaching to enable long-term, sustainable progress.

Evaluation of several of the above programmes has been undertaken, but this is usually relatively basic (e.g. feedback forms from participants). Overall, the study found little evidence of any in-depth rigorous evaluation of programmes involving work with men. This is a significant gap that requires further work.

Having said that, interviews conducted for the study provided a wide range of ideas, comments and suggestions on the likely effectiveness of various methods, approaches and tools; some of these comments follow.

'A domestic violence programme can be very effective for men. A man can profit a lot in his personal life if he learns to reflect about his own power and masculinity.'  
(*Jonni Brem, Men's Counselling Centre, Vienna, Austria*)

'The most important intervention is education; changing the content of all academic disciplines (not only in history and literature) and an assessment of the content of manuals from a gender point of view is a must.'  
(*Krassimira Daskalova, Professor of Feminist History, University of Sofia, Bulgaria*)

'The single thing that would have a real impact would be to show the financial benefits of gender equality or the 'economisation' of gender equality. We need statistics on benefits and losses... There are no tools in the Bulgarian language... The only work delivered so far is the training of policemen to implement the new law and to abide by their regulations.'  
(*Tatyana Kmetova, Center of Women's Studies and Policies, Bulgaria*)

'An effective method of intervention would be public communication, the involvement of public state TV in such emissions, campaigns and shows and the involvement of multidisciplinary teams in the conception of TV programmes oriented to young people.'  
(*Lazar Lazarov, Policymaker and former Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria*)



'Society is ready for more gender equality; we need more ideas about how to make it happen. Positive discrimination in political parties and government may help. Also, self-developed codes of practice for political parties, the media and even academic institutions and committees that would scrutinise gender equality in daily practice could be useful tools.' (Nicos Peristianis, Sociologist, Chairman of the Board of the University of Nicosia and Chairman of the Board of the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, Cyprus)

'The best strategy to get men involved in the discussion on masculinity is to choose appropriate means to address them either directly (through group work and counselling) or via media campaigns and open space discussions. The most effective approach seems to be for men to speak to men. It seems to be more effective than having women trying to explain what is best for men and why gender stereotypes are hurting men as well.' (Martin Jara, League of Open Men, Czech Republic)

'Among the cases of best practice, fathers' groups are mentioned where fathers on leave meet on a regular basis. Initiatives have to be tailored in such a way that they are acceptable and legitimate for men to embark upon. When you want men to meet, there needs to be some activities rather than just talks about parenting, etc., as in the case of mothers' groups. (Kenneth Reinicke, Roskilde University, Denmark)

'Effective methods have to be practical and perceived as bringing immediate added value, i.e. benefits.' (Jari Hautamäki, Lyömätön Linja Espoossa, Finland)

'The White Ribbon Campaign is a good method, talking to men on the street.' (Timo Honkasalo, Pro-feministimiehet, Finland)

'Material should not be too academic (i.e. theoretical and using academic jargon). Video may be a good format, like the material provided by Sweden's Machofabriken. Posters on buses and in trams and stations could also convey the message, as well as the use of YouTube and similar Internet outlets.' (Jeff Hearn, Critical Studies on Men, Finland)

'As a starting point, the most important thing is to access men's point of view to make them understand equality as equally beneficial for men and women. Methods should include a lot of dialogue and interplay between men, with peer groups providing a useful function. It has repeatedly been observed in father and father-child groups that new fathers and fathers-to-be respect and listen very carefully to more experienced 'older' fathers, who have been nominated as leaders of the group. The most valued characteristics of a good counsellor in this field are experience, understanding of the practice and personal commitment. His/her main duty is to create an atmosphere of trust.' (Jouko Huttunen, Fatherhood research, Finland)

'Often only training events are conducted, but there is no follow-up implementation of gender equality measures in daily work. As gender trainers we always try to convince commissioners to conduct pilot projects in their organisations in order to learn to implement processes, recognise routines and learn about the obstacles. This never happens. This is the biggest deficit.' (Andreas Haase, Editor of Switchboard journal, Germany)

As a starting point, the most important thing is to access men's point of view to make them understand equality as equally beneficial for men and women.



'It is necessary to support the networking of organisations and key people committed to the involvement of men in gender equality processes and give them space for dialogue. This is particularly important for emancipation-oriented men and their organisations, and should be supported by money and/or structures.' (Henning von Bergen, *Gunda Werner Institute for Feminism and Gender Democracy, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Germany*)

'The Ministry of Education has developed the biggest mainstream gender equality programme of the last few years in collaboration with the Research Centre for Gender Equality. This was carried out under the third Community Support Framework, with a large amount of educational material developed for various levels of education and teachers trained accordingly. Though the material and training did not specifically address male teachers, its content was based on the social formation of gender identities and stereotypes. This programme was funded by structural funds that derive mainly from the European Union.' (Maria Stratigaki, *Secretary-General for Gender Equality, Ministry of Interior, Decentralisation and E-Government, Athens, Greece*)

'Some useful methods: men's groups, gender-aware school and textbooks, psychodrama groups, or the use of a network of mediators dealing with gender discrimination situations.' (Miklos Hadas, *Institute of Sociology and Social Policy, Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary*)

It is necessary to support the networking of organisations and key people committed to the involvement of men in gender equality processes and give them space for dialogue.

'Recently there was a violent incident against a woman that was videotaped, circulated on the Internet and gained much media attention. A lot of men blogged in and condemned such behaviour. MCWO highlighted on this occasion the importance of men being involved and raising their voice against such behaviour. Though, of course, this was a spontaneous incident, it shows a way.' (Renee Laiviera, *Founder and chairperson of the Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations, Malta*)

'The first step in Poland should be to create a pro-feminist organisation, with men who are working with women for gender equality.' (Katarzyna Wojnicka, *Country researcher, Poland*)

'We don't have a clear picture of what methods might be effective yet, since we are still at the beginning of the story in a way, and we can talk only about individual men who express their support and solidarity for our struggles and efforts. I would say we have "individual/personal" good practices in the public space, in the academic sphere, in our organisations, etc.' (Oana Băluță, *FILIA Chairwoman, Romania*)

'One group with a strong potential are the fathers of daughters; many of them are becoming aware of the gender-stereotypical way in institutional education in Slovakia. They tend to reflect more sensitively the disadvantages their daughters are facing and can thus become an important target group to work with on gender equality.' (David Bosý, *NGO ESFEM, University of Presov, Slovakia*)

# Chapter 4





# Chapter 4

## Overview of emerging issues

### Understanding of gender equality and the involvement of men

In some countries, researchers commented on the fact that 'gender equality' itself was quite a new term and that work on 'men and masculinities' in this context was even more recent. This meant that often the link between the two was not well understood. For example, there was often confusion between *men's involvement in promoting gender equality* and *work on men and masculinities* (which is often a new area even at the academic level in some countries). This meant that respondents replying to the questionnaire or interviewer's questions did not immediately see the connection between the two, even though they were involved more or less explicitly in gender equality actions and supported men's participation in some of their gender equality programmes. For these reasons, some initially thought they did not fit in the study's target group.

Other issues that emerged in this context include the following.

- **The term 'gender equality' is not well understood.** This may be particularly true in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe for historical reasons. As Jivka Marinova, the researcher for the study in Bulgaria noted: "Gender equality" has been introduced as a term in the public discourse, but is still an empty term not well understood by either women or men. When the terms "gender" and "gender equality" were introduced, they sounded completely alien and, unfortunately, they still do, outside of women's NGOs, gender organisations and some academic circles.'
- **Gender equality has persistently been seen as a 'women's issue'.** For example, Ovidiu Anemtoaicei, the researcher for this study in Romania, noted that: 'At the level of state policies, academic and activist spheres, gender equality was conceived as generally having women as the main target group and this stance has been made familiar to the general public in the terms and limits of the EU gender equality discourse.'
- **Many organisations do not see themselves as involved with men and gender equality,** even if they are. For example, Jens van Tricht, the researcher for the study in the Netherlands and the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, noted that: 'Many organisations don't see themselves as being involved with men and gender equality, where I am sure that that is what they are (also) dealing with.'
- **Some organisations have a 'sideways' focus on masculinity** (e.g. sexual health, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) and women's organisations). For example, Jens van Tricht also noted: 'Men and masculinity are not a central point of their work, but in sexual health, gay rights and women's emancipation, many organisations have a sideways focus on boys and men, even though they don't address them directly.'

### The relevance of gender equality for men

'Reasons for men to change: the increased possibilities for love, emotional support and care for and from other men; the privilege and emotional development that may come from increased involvement with care and caring, and work with children; improved health, the reduction of certain illnesses and the extension of life; creation of the conditions for the transformation of the capitalist mode of production (that is inherently gendered) to more liberating productive relations; avoidance of other men's violence and of the fear of men, of killing, of being killed; reduction of global militarism and likelihood of nuclear disaster/annihilation.' (Interview with Jeff Hearn, *Critical Studies on Men*)

Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of international law that is also endorsed at EU level and a precondition for democracy. Women have been largely responsible for placing gender equality on the public agenda. This is unsurprising, given that the negative effects of gender inequality have fallen primarily on them.

However, in recent years it has increasingly been acknowledged that men and boys are also inextricably involved with gender issues and that they have an important role in efforts to achieve equality.

Moreover, it is widely believed that progress towards gender equality will not only improve the lives of women and girls, but will also stimulate positive transformations in the lives of men and boys. At EU level, the Council of Ministers has stated that: 'In order to improve the status of women and promote gender equality, more attention should be paid to how men are involved in the achievement of equality, as well as to the positive impact of gender equality for men and for the well-being of the society as a whole'<sup>(14)</sup>.

The benefits of involving men and boys in gender equality have been articulated in a range of documents and reports<sup>(15)</sup>, together with ways for achieving men's commitment to gender equality. These were frequently endorsed by respondents in the study.

**1. Gender equality holds the promise of improvements in men's and boys' relationships**, not only with women and girls, but also in the relations they often have with other

men and boys. Men and boys live in social relationships with women and girls as wives, partners, mothers, aunts, daughters, friends, classmates, fellow employees, etc., and the quality of every man's life depends to a large extent on the quality of those relationships.

'Gender equality is a channel for happiness in the life of a couple.' (*Maro Varnavidou, Secretary-General of the National Machinery of Women's Rights, Ministry of Justice and Public Order, Cyprus*)

'Advantages for the individual man are: coming to a new understanding of his own gender role (in society and the organisation); access to topics such as the ability to take responsibility; the smooth cooperation of men and women as a team; and the assumption of more responsibility in partnerships and the family.' (*Andreas Haase, Editor of Switchboard journal, Germany*)

'Involving men in gender equality is beneficial for both men and women for their better communication and collaboration, an improved emotional relationship and the breaking up of internalised gender stereotypes.' (*Nicholas Christakis, Professor of Social Psychology, Department of Communication and Mass Media, University of Athens, Greece*)

'An involved and aware man is good for himself, his partner and his children; a healthy man contributes more to his family and his community.' (*Colin Fowler, Men's Health Forum, Ireland*)

**2. Gender inequality and stereotypical gender roles and norms have damaging effects on the personal health and well-being of men, as well as women** (although in different ways). Men and boys face specific health problems, such as premature death through an accident or suicide and higher levels of drug and alcohol abuse. Many of these are linked to attempts by men to live up to dominant notions of masculinity – 'be tough',

(14) Council of the European Union, Council Conclusions on men and gender equality, Council meeting, Brussels, 30 November and 1 December 2006 ([http://www.eu2006.fi/NEWS\\_AND\\_DOCUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS/VKO48/EN\\_GB/1164987131570/\\_FILES/76348606395122256/DEFAULT/91959.PDF](http://www.eu2006.fi/NEWS_AND_DOCUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS/VKO48/EN_GB/1164987131570/_FILES/76348606395122256/DEFAULT/91959.PDF)).

(15) For example: Connell, R. W., 'The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality', United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Expert Group Meeting, Brasilia, Brazil, 21–24 October 2003 (EGM/Men-Boys-GE/2003/BP.1); Kaufman, M. (2003), 'The Aim Framework – Addressing and Involving Men and Boys to Promote Gender Equality and End Gender Discrimination and Violence', Unicef; Ruxton, S. (2009), 'Man Made: Men, masculinities and equality in public policy', Coalition on Men and Boys, London



'compete', 'take risks'. Promoting and nurturing alternative models for being a man can do much to improve men's health and well-being and reduce the negative impact of their actions on themselves and others.

'Involving men in gender equality underlines men's resources, the potential for change and the possibilities of empowerment for men by breaking traditional, rigid male roles. However, it is easier said than done.' (*Kenneth Reinicke, Roskilde University, Denmark*)

'Formulating violent masculine personalities generates inequality and unhappiness. Being trained in the army for two years reinforces the tough masculine model.' (*Maro Varnavidou, Secretary-General of the National Machinery of Women's Rights, Ministry of Justice and Public Order, Cyprus*)

'Traditional masculinity is a serious health risk. Men casting off its heavy and limiting role requirements can move on to new challenges and live longer and healthier lives.' (*Timo Honkasalo, Profeministimiehet, Finland*)

'If men understood the importance of gender equality and were involved in gender equality practices, their lives could change significantly. There would be less self-destructive male behaviour in Lithuania.' (*Margarita Jankauskaitė, Centre for Equality Advancement, Lithuania*)

### **3. Men may support gender equality because they believe it will contribute to the well-being of their community or society.**

Greater awareness of gender roles and norms will reduce the pressure on men to conform to damaging and rigid forms of masculinity. For example, this is likely to reduce the number of 'violences' (i.e. violence in all its forms) by men and help improve community safety and develop peaceful conflict resolution. It will also contribute to raising the next generation of boys (and girls) in a more egalitarian way.

Promoting and nurturing alternative models for being a man can do much to improve men's health and well-being and reduce the negative impact of their actions on themselves and others.

'Having more open categories of masculinity means that men do not have to conform to a particular view of masculinity. It weakens the hegemonic discourse of masculinity and has a positive effect on perceptions of male identity.' (*Henk De Smaele, University of Antwerp, Belgium*)

'Men can discover the challenges of new fields they can enter through self-education and training. There would be benefits for the whole of society.' (*Lazar Lazarov, policymaker and former Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria*)

'Fair sharing of responsibilities between men and women in all areas and sufficient care structures could be most beneficial to economic and social development.' (*Anna Karamanou, former Chairperson of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament*)

### **4. Men can be motivated by interests other than maintaining their own privileges<sup>(16)</sup>.**

They may seek to challenge gender inequality and gender stereotypes for political or ethical reasons, or through concern for the well-being of children (especially their own) and women whom they know. They may see it as part of a wider equality and social justice project.

(16) Flood, M., 'Mainstreaming Men in Gender and Development', Presentation to AusAID Gender Seminar Series, Canberra, 8 December 2005.

'We must also realise that gender inequality is to the disadvantage of women and men have to give up privileges.' (*Henk De Smaele, University of Antwerp, Belgium*)

'It is important that men involved in the gender equality debate reflect on their advantageous male position and bring it into the discussion.' (*Petr Pavlik, Charles University School of Humanities, Czech Republic*)

**5. Addressing men through public policy encourages them to take responsibility for change.** It can also help reduce many men's sense of anxiety and fear as 'traditional' masculinities are undermined<sup>(17)</sup>.

'If men are involved in building gender equality, they will feel included in the decisions made and less threatened by gender equality. 'As a by-product, men will also learn to express their fears and concerns.' (*Tomi Timperi, Miessakit, Finland*)

**6. Involving men may help to create wider consensus and support on issues that have previously been marginalised as 'women's issues'** (e.g. in relation to family, violence, sexual and reproductive health).

'It broadens the spectrum. If the fight for equality of women is not only fed by women but also by men, it becomes more universal, and has more chance of success and more credibility.' (*Geraldine Reymanants, Instituut voor Gelijkheid van Vrouwen en Mannen, Belgium*)

If men are involved in building gender equality, they will feel included in the decisions made and less threatened by gender equality.

'It is important that male faces appear in campaigns for gender equality.' (*Lazar Lazarov, Policymaker and former Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria*)

'Men learn that by engaging in gender equality work they can influence it and participate in building a new culture where gender equality is no longer only a women's cause. And as more men engage, the threshold for joining becomes lower.' (*Jari Hautamäki, Lyömätön Linja Espoossa, Finland*)

**7. Targeting men, especially those with a powerful role in institutions, may help encourage other men to participate in gender equality actions.**

'Making these men visible for other men and the whole society also has a strong awareness-raising role, and can make other people believe that it is not awkward for men to deal with gender equality issues.' (*Judit Takacs, Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Hungary*)

'The most important thing about the involvement of men in gender equality is visibility on alternatives to the mainstream. Men who don't recognise themselves in the mainstream need to be given a voice and women need supporting.' (*Ton van Elst, MOVISIE, the Netherlands*)

'Decision-makers are usually men and these are the people that need to be influenced. They must be made to feel responsible for the changes that need to be brought about.' (*Nicos Peristianis, Sociologist, Chairman of the Board of the University of Nicosia and Chairman of the Board of the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies*)

(17) See footnote 16.



'If men are involved in gender equality processes, the chance is much higher that they support the processes. Moreover, involving men at executive level increases the likelihood that future managers will support these processes.' (*Andreas Haase, Editor of Switchboard journal, Germany*)

### **8. Engaging men may encourage the development of effective partnerships between men and women, and between men's and women's organisations.**

'Cooperation between women and men, instead of "sex wars", can be the first step in changing patterns of general social relations in Polish society.' (*Dariusz Bugalski, Journalist, Poland*)

### **9. Some men and boys are discriminated against on grounds directly linked to gender<sup>(18)</sup>, including their sexuality and/or association with 'feminine' characteristics or activities. It is, therefore, in their interests for the current gender order to change.**

## **Men's diversity**

Men as a group have an advantage over women because of their sex (the 'patriarchal dividend') and this dominance is usually built into social relations and structures to make it appear normal and natural. However, the benefits men derive individually are not experienced equally and men's lives reflect their different actual or perceived relations to the power they hold.

There is no one universal form of 'masculinity' – indeed there are significant differences between men (as there are between women). The term

'masculinities'<sup>(19)</sup> is often used to reflect the various ways in which men relate to hegemonic notions of masculinity<sup>(20)</sup>. 'Masculinities' can be understood as collective and individual experiences and practices, conditioned and sustained by cultures within particular groups or institutions (e.g. the army, prisons, sports clubs, factories and schools).

'Intersectionality' highlights how various socially and culturally constructed categories such as gender, race, class, disability, sexual orientation and other aspects of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic social inequality. The concept of 'masculinities' can be similarly linked to these social divisions. An emerging theme in research literature on masculinity is the dynamic interrelationships between these strands and their impact on women, children and men. It is essential to be aware of how specific strands interconnect and to address them.

## **Gay, bisexual and transgender men**

The lives of gay, bisexual and transgender men are structured by their experiences in a dominant heterosexual culture and in particular by homophobia. Although same-sex relationships are legal in all countries in the study, progress has historically been very uneven and such recognition is still relatively recent in many EU states, particularly, but not exclusively, in Central and Eastern Europe. Public attitudes also vary widely, as evidenced by the touchstone issue of same-sex marriage; a 2006 *Eurobarometer* poll<sup>(21)</sup> showed majority support in the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, Germany and the Czech Republic, but very low levels in Romania, Latvia, Cyprus,

(18) Hearn, J. (2001), 'Men and Gender Equality: Resistance, Responsibilities and Reaching Out', Örebro, Sweden, 15 and 16 March 2001.

(19) Use of the term 'masculinities' has been criticised for a range of reasons; some prefer the term 'male practices'; see, for example, Hearn, J. (1996), 'Is Masculinity Dead? A Critique of the Concept of Masculinity/Masculinities', Mac an Ghail, M. (ed.), *Understanding Masculinities*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes.

(20) Connell, R. W. (1995), *Masculinities*, Polity, Cambridge.

(21) European Commission (2006), 'Public Opinion in the European Union', *Standard Eurobarometer 66*.



Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary and Malta. Against this background, it is unsurprising that there has been a backlash to the emergence of a more visible LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) movement in some of the latter countries. In Latvia, for example, the first Pride March (2005) provoked negative changes to the Constitution, defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman to avoid the possibility of same-sex marriage. Baltic Pride 2010 took place in Vilnius (Lithuania) with a heavy police presence, accompanied by violence from opponents of gay rights.

The main focus of LGBT groups in relation to gender identity and sexual orientation is linked to some of the concerns of (women's) groups working for gender equality. In particular, the focus is on the role of LGBT groups in questioning and undermining hegemonic (heterosexual) forms of masculinity. However, alliances between these groups can sometimes be uneasy<sup>(22)</sup>. The particular circumstances of gay, bisexual and transgender men as members of largely invisible minorities also require special consideration. Distinct issues may include: identity development; coming out to friends and family; gay parenting; and experiences of discrimination, harassment and violence<sup>(23)</sup>. There are also concerns about gender division and traditional gendered patterns within the gay community and movement.

In the study, a reasonable spread of organisations was identified that work with men on LGBT issues in Member States. The actors covered a wide range of issues, from political representation to awareness-raising, education, health advice (mental and physical), individual counselling, research and social events. Examples of these organisations include: Homosexuellen Initiative Wien (Austria); Landsforeningen for bøsser, lesbiske, biseksuelle og transpersoner (Denmark); Lesben

und Schwulenverband in Deutschland (Germany); Cassero (Italy); Mozaika (Latvia); Stowarzyszenie Lambda Warszawa (Poland); Legebitra (Slovenia); and Stonewall (United Kingdom).

## Men from ethnic minorities

Another critical research strand is the experience and position of men from ethnic minorities. While concerns of men (and women) from ethnic minority groups are sometimes addressed under the label 'diversity', an intersectional approach brings interlocking power relations and inequalities and their effects on individuals more clearly into focus.

The issues facing men from ethnic minorities overlap with those facing other men (indeed, some men have 'multiple memberships' of minority and majority communities); however, practices are shaped by their different cultural and religious identities. More broadly, they are affected by a complex mix of racism, discrimination, and educational and social disadvantage. The ways these experiences play out in practice vary considerably between groups.

The intersection of race and gender issues is also complicated. It is often argued that traditional gender roles remain unquestioned for men in many ethnic minority groups. In campaigns for racial equality, there is also historical evidence of male activists deliberately sidelining or submerging gender inequalities faced by women from ethnic minorities. However, an interviewee from Germany, Michael Tunc, warned of the dangers of oversimplification into stereotypes of the male oppressor and female victim. While acknowledging that the 'patriarchal dividend' also applies to migrant men, he argued that 'men are often still seen as patriarchal and traditional and it is not perceived that there are men with an immigrant background who see the benefits of equal opportunities policy'<sup>(24)</sup>.

(22) National Report on Romania.

(23) Stepelman, L. M., 'Working with Gay Men', Flood, M., Gardiner, J. K., Pease, B., Pringle, K. (2007), *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*, Routledge, London/New York.

(24) Interview with Michael Tunc, Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Männlichkeiten und Migration, Germany.



Among the actors in the database, very few were identified that stated specifically that their main focus was working with men from ethnic minorities. However, there were some cases where the target reached in practice was mainly an ethnic minority group. In the United Kingdom, the South London organisation Working with Men has a high proportion of Afro-Caribbean staff and undertakes much work with this community, particularly on education and fatherhood. An interesting 'cross-strand' example was found in Germany, where Gays und Lesbians aus der Türkei (Gays and Lesbians from Turkey) has developed materials with education professionals from schools and those involved in youth and outreach work for tackling sexism and homophobia among young men (project on emancipatory work with boys). Although most members of this organisation are of Turkish or Kurdish origin, it also has Arab, Iranian, American, Swedish, Cameroonian and Indian members.

A more specific and identifiable group of organisations are working with migrant men. In the Netherlands, Platform Buitenlanders Rijnmond is an umbrella organisation for migrant self-organisations in the Rotterdam region, and Inter-Lokaal in Nijmegen has run a parenting project in an asylum centre for refugee men, a project for Somali men entitled 'Somali men in the picture' and provided empowerment training for unemployed migrant men. In Denmark, KVININFO, a knowledge centre and research library on gender, gender equality and ethnicity, has established mentor networks for male migrants in two areas of the country to support their integration at work and socially. It has also presented online positive integration stories of men. In Germany, foundations are being laid for a federal network on masculinities, migration and multiple identities to improve nationwide communication between professionals. It will also promote more nuanced discussion of issues, improve public awareness, and undertake advocacy work and lobbying to move beyond stereotypes by showing the diverse situations and experiences of migrant groups and intersections between them.

## Boys and young men

Work with boys and young men reflects long-standing and widespread concerns, and in some cases 'moral panics' about their health (e.g. suicides and mental health), education (e.g. school expulsions and academic underachievement) and behaviour (e.g. risk-taking and violence). Often these concerns intersect with other identity issues, such as race and religion.

A wide range of programmes that involve work with boys and/or young men have been established in EU states and were identified in the database. Although these were found in many countries, there were exceptions where work with these groups is barely developed. The work includes: programmes for fathers and sons (Stichting P=P, the Netherlands); health interventions (Men's Moment, Finland; UMO.se, Sweden; CALM, United Kingdom; Brook, United Kingdom); career guidance (Neue Wege, Germany); programmes to tackle homophobia (KomBi, Germany); anti-violence initiatives (Crisis Intervention Society, Poland; Fryshuset, Sweden; Respect, United Kingdom; Youth Action, Northern Ireland); and education programmes (e.g. Macho Factory, Men for Gender Equality, Rädde Barnens Ungdomsförbund, Sweden; Association for Gender Equality and Liberty, Romania; Boys Development Project, United Kingdom).

The ideological orientation, content and form of work with boys and young men vary significantly. Traditional approaches focus primarily on channelling 'masculine energy' in appropriate ways, largely through conventional approaches such as football and other sports; however, there is a risk here of reinforcing stereotypical notions of masculinity. In contrast, some interventions have a prime focus that certain boys/young men can become 'troublesome' because of the way they position themselves in opposition to femininity, monopolising space, being disruptive and causing sexual harassment. A third alternative is to take a more developmental approach, concentrating on the impact of male socialisation and engaging with the realities of young men's lives, without neces-

sarily accepting their negative behaviour<sup>(25)</sup>. There is some overlap between different methods and no consensus on the most effective ones. However, it is increasingly recognised that it is important to engage with boys and young men's thoughts, feelings and needs, while not sidelining the concerns of girls and young women.

## Older men

Although the socioeconomic status of older men tends to be superior to that of older women, they often face significant health problems: they usually die before women (although the gap is generally narrowing) and are more vulnerable to certain diseases. Some groups of men (e.g. widowed men or those that never married) face a particular disadvantage and can suffer from social isolation. Older men are also less likely than women to use existing care services, owing to factors such as traditional notions of male independence and self-reliance and the 'feminised' feel of much provision<sup>(26)</sup>.

Very little specific work with older men that takes into account gender considerations was found in this research. One targeted programme was the UK's Men in Sheds. This approach to the provision of day services is specifically designed to appeal to older men who are unlikely to make use of mainstream day services, even though they may be isolated and lonely. Originally developed in Australia, it involves the provision of a workshop, tools and equipment with which older men can use their skills and be involved in productive activities while enjoying the benefits of working in a social group. It can also provide a route for older men to access information, advice, health promotion and other services that they might not otherwise seek. The programme is

currently being evaluated and it will be interesting to see the benefits it has for men and gender equality.

## Men with disabilities

Men with disabilities live their lives in ways that contradict the usual stereotypes of masculinity. They are often unwilling or feel unable to live up to 'ideal' models of masculinity based on body strength and performance<sup>(27)</sup>. Men's common perception that they must live up to the standards expected of their gender – for example, that they cannot 'fail', must be 'strong' and 'tough' – can therefore be at odds with the reality of life for disabled men.

Gender perspective is rarely visible in initiatives aimed at disabled men. Only one organisation that had given specific consideration to the issues facing men with disabilities (the Estonian Union of Disabled Women) was included in the database. While this organisation's major focus is on work with women, the project had undertaken research in relation to the experiences of disabled men<sup>(28)</sup>. This highlighted particular concerns around reproductive health and sexuality, family life, fatherhood, poverty and social exclusion. In addition, the organisation's questionnaire response revealed some hidden attitudes and experiences among men with disabilities. They may be scared of poorer health, incapacity and sexual problems and may well not have discussed sexual issues with their partners. Tackling violence was also regarded as an important priority.

(25) Interview with Trefor Lloyd, Boys Development Project, United Kingdom.

(26) Arber, S., Davidson, K., Ginn, J. (eds) (2003), *Gender and Ageing*, Open University Press, Maidenhead; Ruxton, S. (2007), *Working with Older Men: A review of Age Concern services*, Age Concern England, London.

(27) Shakespeare, T. (1999), 'When is a man not a man? – When he's disabled'; Wild, J. (ed.), *Working with Men for Change*, UCL Press, London; Gerschick, T. (2005), 'Masculinity and degrees of bodily normativity in Western culture', Kimmel, M., Hearn, J., Connell, R. W. (eds), *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, Sage, California/London/New Delhi.

(28) Rohtmets, K. (2007), 'Täisväärtuslik pere- ja seksuaalelu puuetega meestele' (A quality family and sexual life for men with special needs), funded by the Open Estonia Foundation.



## Men's social backgrounds: class, inequality and location

Finally, other aspects of men's social backgrounds such as class and location are also important to consider. While shifting capital flows and investment patterns in recent years have enabled some men to accumulate vast wealth, others have experienced a significant decline in jobs in specific sectors or countries/regions. This has affected women too, with job losses in sectors with a greater concentration of working class men (e.g. construction and manufacturing) mirrored by sectors with a higher concentration of working class women (e.g. services and retail).

The Irish National Report for the study provides a graphic description of the impact of boom and bust on men; although the context is specific, many of the effects are echoed elsewhere in the EU.

'The boom was construction-led and provided high earnings for traditional male skilled and unskilled labour. It was a good time to be a man. The traditional provider role based on hard graft and physical labour was rewarded and the role affirmed if you were in employment. If you were not, it left a sense of failure and shame; not even in this boom when everything was going well could he deliver. When the bubble burst, this consensus about performance of the traditional role also burst. Unemployment among men rocketed, especially in the construction industry. All of the success that affirmed that role melted, the wealth that was earned was no longer there to sustain the lifestyle that had grown up on its back. Many men were left bereft, as they could no longer rely on their labour or indeed on their traditional resilience; they were now living in a time and a context over which they had no control.' (Sé Franklin, *Irish National Report*)

## Why do men hesitate to get involved in gender equality issues?

The study data revealed a range of obstacles and challenges to involving men in gender equality strategies. These exist at a range of levels, from those facing individual men (and women) to wider societal factors.

In some countries, a major obstacle was highlighted in that **gender equality is not on the public agenda at all**. This, of course, obstructs any attempts to involve men in working towards such a goal. This may be particularly true in Central and Eastern Europe for historical reasons. Under these circumstances, men are understandably less willing to demonstrate their support publicly<sup>(29)</sup>, even those who are interested and potentially supportive.

Another widespread obstacle frequently highlighted in the study interviews, replies to questionnaires and country reports is that in many – if not most – EU countries, **gender equality is still seen as a 'women's issue'**. The Scottish organisation Children in Scotland stated that: 'Gender equality is still widely perceived to be concerned exclusively with promoting the rights and interests of women. There is limited understanding that public sector duties also apply in relation to men and fathers as service users.'

One Irish interviewee characterised this very common attitude as 'gender is for women, it's not for men or about men' (Colin Fowler, *Men's Health Forum*). Many men believe that gender equality does not, therefore, have much, if anything, to do with them and has nothing positive to offer them. For many, the general perception is that gender equality is promoted by feminist approaches that only seek to 'take rights away from men and give them to women'<sup>(30)</sup>. From this perspective, gender equality is often regarded by men warily or with

(29) Interview with Tatyana Kmetova, Bulgaria.

(30) Interview with Jari Hautamäki, Lyömätön Linja Espoossa, Finland.

hostility. As a Finnish interviewee put it: 'Feminism-flavoured gender equality is a bogey for most men, something alien, something not familiar, something frightening' (*Tomi Timperi, Miessakit, Finland*).

Even when gender equality is part of public discourse, many interviewees felt strongly that **there is considerable pressure on men to conform to traditional roles and stereotypes**.

An Irish respondent stated that: 'Tradition tells a man of the plan for his life: play and learn, then work to provide, have a family, retire. Little has changed' (*Colin Fowler, Men's Health Forum*). A Greek interviewee argued that: 'The expression of feelings is not allowed in this masculine model (Men don't cry). Men are scorned if they are interested in gender equality issues or if they are involved in housework'. (*Anna Karamanou, former Chairperson of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament*).

Interviewees also noted that traditional masculine attitudes can make it 'difficult for many men to acknowledge their vulnerability to health problems' (*Men's Health Forum, United Kingdom*). If a man displays any kind of weakness, this can also be denigrated – including by men themselves – as feminine or gay: 'There is an absolute terror in individual men of gender bending, of coming across as gay, and female, and so on' (*Henk De Smaele, University of Antwerp, Belgium*).

Some interviewees also noted **the role that some women play in bolstering the status quo** by overprotecting and/or serving their male partners and children<sup>(31)</sup> or by not allowing or encouraging them to participate in care work: 'The dominant perception is that women are the gatekeepers of the family, irrespective of their participation in the labour market' (*Renee Laiviera, Founder and chairperson of the Malta Confederation of Women's Organisations*).

(31) Interview with Nicholas Christakis, Professor of Social Psychology, Department of Communication and Mass Media, University of Athens.

Others highlighted how **other groups and institutions (e.g. peers, the media and the educational system) can also reinforce traditional stereotypical roles**. One UK organisation argued: 'We face continuing mistrust from funders, policymakers and others, who see our attempt to promote men's involvement in caregiving as anti-women'. (*Adrienne Burgess, Fatherhood Institute*).

A range of suggestions were made by interviewees to tackle the weight of established stereotypes and traditions, including:

- **improved support for women** to enable them to participate in the labour market and civic activities, and for men to encourage them to play a more active part as fathers/carers (e.g. through specific leave targeted at fathers);
- **awareness-raising programmes** targeted at men (e.g. seminars/training for staff in the public and private sectors on gender equality issues);
- **social awareness campaigns** targeting men and highlighting the benefits of gender equality and how men can play a greater role in moving towards this;
- **media balance** (e.g. efforts to shift traditional patterns of representation and involvement of men and women in all forms of media);
- **gender mainstreaming** in education at all levels (e.g. within curricula, management and organisations)<sup>(32)</sup>.

Against this background, it is unsurprising that interviewees throughout the EU felt that **many men display either apathy or resistance to change in the direction of gender equality**. This is especially the case if equality entails giving

(32) For example, interviews with Lazar Lazarov, policymaker and former Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria and Anna Karamanou, former Chairperson of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament.



up some privileges (e.g. higher-status jobs, better pay, more media attention, greater influence and occupying public positions) and results in them having less power at work and in the home. As Timo Honkasalo of Finland's Profeministimiehet noted in an interview: 'The biggest barrier is apathy, or at least reluctance. Even for men who in principle support gender equality, practical work to promote it seems to be an insurmountable barrier.' Jeff Hearn argued in his interview that: 'The biggest risk is that men start to use gender equality rhetoric to gain more power and even to attempt to redefine gender equality, to put down feminism and feminist efforts.' Timo Honkasalo added: 'In addition to such reluctance, there is active resistance. Activists who engage in gender equality work may even be considered traitors. This can only be overcome by gender equality consciousness, implanted as early as possible.'

To tackle this resistance, interviewees felt that it is important to demonstrate through practical examples that sharing power will have considerable benefits for men, women and children<sup>(33)</sup>. US sociologist Michael Kimmel wrote that gender equality offers men the possibility of 'richer, fuller and happier lives, with our friends, with our lovers, with our partners, with our children'<sup>(34)</sup>.

Interviewees saw one factor undermining men's confidence in becoming involved in gender equality as the **lack of positive male role models in society and the media**<sup>(35)</sup>. For instance, in relation to Lithuania, Dr Margarita Jankauskaitė (Centre for Equality Advancement) suggested in her interview that: 'If a famous basketball player publicly shows that he takes care of his daughter and changes

her nappies, he sends a politically correct message to his fans, especially to younger ones, that it is normal to do so. However, publicly seen and admired men are essentially chauvinist and sexist.' She concludes that different male examples are desperately needed, and that authoritative men or men in power should be the main target of gender work because everyone pays attention to what they say in public. Similarly, Jouko Huttunen (Fatherhood research, Finland) argues that there are not enough influential role models in men's immediate neighbourhoods, workplaces or even the media. He proposes that the best-known male politicians and male heads of influential corporations, trade unions, etc., should be obliged to support gender equality initiatives (e.g. by taking parental leave).

Another perceived obstacle is that **attempts to engage men in gender equality strategies are sometimes regarded as a distraction from the fundamental task of empowering women**, and that 'if men join in the struggle, they will take over'<sup>(36)</sup>. There is also a risk of diverting resources away from support for women in a context where such resources (e.g. for refugees or rape crisis centres) are already under threat. Engaging men in gender equality should not therefore involve abandoning support for projects and strategies that focus on women.

## What would foster greater involvement of men?

Many interviewees felt that **addressing apathy or resistance among many men must also be accompanied by efforts to address the real problems that some men experience**. Such difficulties (e.g. poor health and high suicide rates) are sometimes erroneously used to argue that gender equality has 'gone too far' and to justify attempts to

(33) Interview with Jari Hautamäki, Lyömätön Linja Espoossa, Finland; interview with Geraldine Reymenants, Instituut voor Gelijkheid van Vrouwen en Mannen, Belgium.

(34) Kimmel, M., *Gender Equality: Not for Women Only*, lecture presented at the symposium 'Women, Business and Society in the 21st Century', Madrid, 18 April 2005.

(35) Interview with Peter Pavlik, Gender Studies, Prague, Czech Republic.

(36) Dr Marceline Naudi, Lecturer, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, Faculty of Economics, Management and Accountancy, University of Malta.

When we do engage with men, they are almost always actively supportive.

shore up men's position and undermine important advances in the status and rights of women and children. These perspectives are frequently based on a false and apolitical notion of symmetry (men's problems are equal to women's problems), denying any deeper structural analysis<sup>(37)</sup>. Nevertheless, it is necessary to respond effectively to the issues raised and not ignore them. Henning von Bergen (*Gunda Werner Institute for Feminism and Gender Democracy, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Germany*) argues that: 'There are 'blind spots' regarding men in the debate about gender, for example violence against men. These issues have to be taken seriously and we have to find an adequate approach to deal with them. Otherwise, these topics will be addressed by men's rights activists in an inadequate way.'

A related challenge, interviewees noted, is **how to convince men, beyond those who are already active or potentially interested, that participating in gender equality efforts is worthwhile**. One strategy is to focus on 'opportunity moments' in men's lives when they may be more open to re-examining and reflecting on the ways in which they live and making changes. These may include becoming a father, experiencing illness or a relationship breakdown. Another approach is to focus more actively on media strategies and to explore how to promote a more attractive 'offer' to men using modern means of communication. In the vast majority of cases, it is likely that encouragement will work better than attempts to cajole men into acting for gender equality.

On the basis of its grass-roots contact with men, the White Ribbon Campaign in the United Kingdom argued positively, and perhaps surprisingly, that

'when we do engage with men, they are almost always actively supportive'. Nevertheless, men may be compelled to reassess their options in some situations. For instance, one interviewee argued that men in Greece 'will be forced to change due to changing circumstances and the economic crisis, taking up traditionally "female" jobs such as carers' (*Maria Stratigaki, former General Secretary for Gender Equality, Ministry of Interior, Decentralisation and E-Government, Athens*). She concludes that a policy of positive action in employment sectors where men are under-represented might help in this direction.

Other suggestions from respondents in the interviews included the following.

**Showing and proving the benefits of gender equality for men:** a number of interviewees stressed the importance of showing men that they benefit from gender equality, as well as women.

'We should stress the benefits for personal, family and social life and for society from the participation of men in gender equality.' (*Maro Varnavidou, Secretary-General of the National Machinery of Women's Rights, Ministry of Justice and Public Order, Cyprus*)

'The topic needs a more positive image (i.e. as has happened with smoking and a healthy lifestyle). The positive impact on the life of men themselves should be discussed more and promoted, to encourage them to behave differently and break gender stereotypes and prejudices that still prevail in society. There should be a message like it is great to be a "new man".' (*Gabriel Bianchi, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia*)

'Young fathers enjoy having a real relationship to their children. They also enjoy having more roles in the household and are no longer the helpless man at the stove after coming home from work, like their fathers and grandfathers. They gain power in education and household affairs.' (*Jonni Brem, Men's Counselling Centre, Vienna, Austria*)

(37) Interview with Professor Brid Featherstone, Open University, United Kingdom.



Interviewees also noted that **support from women and women's groups was important, though not always easy to gain.**

'In the first years of feminism, there was some kind of hostility against men; we need to involve them in a more positive way, stressing the benefits of this participation.' (Maro Varnavidou, *Secretary-General of the National Machinery of Women's Rights, Ministry of Justice and Public Order, Cyprus*)

'The men involved in gender equality lack positive feedback from women's NGOs.' (Gabriel Bianchi, *Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia*)

'Building alliances takes time, energy, resources and goodwill, with both sides showing perseverance and patience and the courage to get it wrong and work it through. It is the struggle to hear each other that a useful process can come up with new outcomes.' (Sé Franklin, *Men's Development Network, Ireland*)

'The main barriers and challenges are in communication with feminist NGOs and activists. However, to overcome those barriers and work in closer cooperation is an effective way to overcome barriers which men are facing when involved in gender equality.' (Martin Jara, *League of Open Men, Czech Republic*)

'The collaboration between Praxis and the feminist collectives has been a necessity.' (Vincent Libert, *Director of Praxis, Belgium*)

It is important to take into account the **diversity among men** in their identities, motivations, attitudes and roles<sup>(38)</sup>. Different groups of men and boys have different and conflicting interests, and many are fully supportive of moves towards gender equality: 'When working with men, one must pay attention to the way in which one speaks on the sociocultural level. There are subcultures where the vision of masculinity is very different. This is not just about listening to the middle classes. If we want to reach a large audience, we have to pay attention to these subcultures and use appropriate language in order to open new avenues of discussion'. (Max Nissol, *Genres Pluriels, Belgium*).

A number of interviewees said they felt it was important to **ensure that men feel they are listened to**, although this should not go so far that men take over activities and campaigns.

'One success factor is when men feel they are listened to and that their perspective has been taken into account with real interest; and afterwards that these viewpoints have been taken into account when drawing up policies.' (Geraldine Reymenants, *Instituut voor Gelijkheid van Vrouwen en Mannen, Belgium*)

'Men have to be heard if they are going to commit themselves. And the manner in which gender equality is presented can mean a lot.' (Jari Hautamäki, *Lyömätön Linja Espoossa, Finland*)

(38) Crowley, N. (2006), 'Men in Gender Equality', Varanka, J., Narhinen, A., Siukola, R. (2006), *Men and Gender Equality: Towards Progressive Policies*, Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Report 2006:75.



'It takes courage to become engaged in gender equality as a man. Men run the risk of becoming outsiders in their organisation. Managers have to create an open climate that is held in high esteem for these issues, otherwise men will not run the risk.'  
(Andreas Haase, Editor of *Switchboard journal*, Germany)

**Finally, the risks of *not* engaging with men should not be ignored.** As the UK's Coalition on Men and Boys argued in a report<sup>(39)</sup>: 'Focusing exclusively on women can leave them with even more work to do and may entrench static definitions of women (e.g. as 'carers') and men (e.g. as 'bread-winners'). Moreover, the vast majority of decision-makers (most of whom are male) will continue to ignore the relevance of gender issues; as a result, gender will remain a peripheral issue and will not be integrated effectively into policy and programmes.'

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(39) Ruxton, S. (2009), 'Man Made: Men, masculinities and equality in public policy', the Coalition on Men and Boys.



# Conclusions and ways to go forward

The research for this report has identified a considerable amount of work in the area of men working for gender equality and men and masculinities in many EU Member States. Most of this work is being carried out by NGOs, although there are some interesting national and regional government initiatives in some countries. Collected information is stored in the database, which is accessible through EIGE's website (<http://www.eige.europa.eu>).

However, it must be acknowledged that this area is very much in its infancy and is also patchy compared with work on gender equality from women's perspective. Asked about gaps in this work, most respondents for this research would concur with the view that: 'This whole area is a gap' (Malta) and: 'This work is only beginning – it is working in patches, by geography, in different sectors' (Ireland). This is not just true in some newer Member States where gender equality work has developed relatively recently, but also in countries where work on men and gender equality has advanced furthest.

This research project was, therefore, very much needed as a step to mapping and understanding the work being done in this arena in all 27 Member States and building on good practice. Some reflections on further ways to increase men's involvement in gender equality now follow.

There is a need to take evaluation and monitoring forward, spreading knowledge across EU Member States and providing technical assistance on how to perform impact evaluation of programmes, projects and organisations that could be adapted for different country contexts. The latter could be part of a larger effort to provide toolkits on engaging men and boys in gender equality adapted to an EU context.

Another way forward is to encourage European institutions involved in work on gender equality to also pay attention to men and masculinities. As the study found that most work on men and masculinities is being carried out at NGO level, it is particularly important to broaden the work to include the public sector, local, national and regional governments, and business organisations. In some countries, researchers have identified work already being carried out by the public sector and connections between interested governments from different EU countries could be facilitated. A significant challenge is to make masculinity issues and responses to them explicit rather than implicit within existing policymaking.

There has been limited time and resources to investigate good practices in this research project: more work on this theme is necessary and important.

Many people working on this issue are not aware of the innovative work on this theme in other countries. The links between men and masculinities and broader work on gender equality are also not clear. It is therefore essential to bring people together to share ideas and practices, for example at conferences and seminars. The topics could include evaluation methods, violence prevention or intersectionality. Another option would be to set up mentoring arrangements between actors with different levels of knowledge and expertise in some of these areas, so that they can learn from each other and work together on practical projects.

Taking into account the fact that the field of involving men in gender equality is an emerging area, the core research team believes that opportunities at EU and national levels available to NGOs and other actors developing the field would be a strategic

contribution at this stage. It is essential to keep in mind, however, that funding for work of this kind should not detract from funding for the crucial work being done with women's organisations on gender equality.

Last, but not the least, is the role of the European Institute for Gender Equality in further development and update of the database produced for this research.



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